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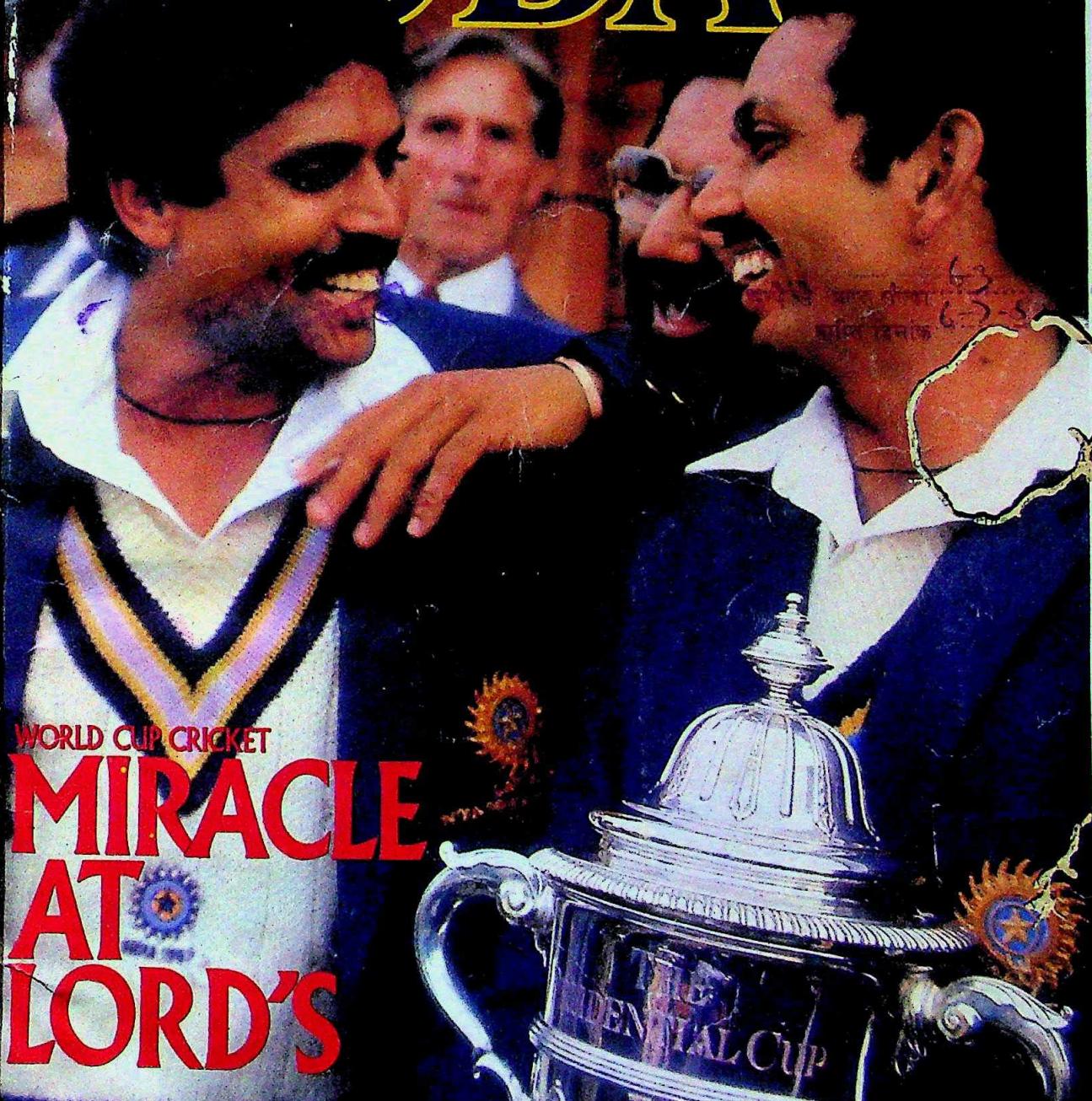
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INDIA

# TODAY

JULY 15, 1983

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**THE BIRLA**

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**Cricket**

It was easily Indian cricket's finest hour. In a dramatic, action-packed final at Lord's last week, Kapil Dev led his refurbished team to a electrifying win over the mighty West Indies in the third Prudential World Cup. By confounding the odds and defying the West Indies, the cup holders India deservedly earned the title. An analysis of India's victory and an exclusive interview with Kapil Dev. Page 42

**Delhi****Birlas**

Following the fire that gutted Gopala Towers, the high-rise office building in New Delhi last month, Delhi's Lt-Governor Jagmohan has launched an all-out war on similar buildings in the capital that violate fire and building laws. Investigations show that he will have his hands full. Almost every major high-rise building in Delhi represents a fire hazard, having ignored basic building laws. Page 88

The recent death of G.D. Birla, doyen of Indian industry and patriarch of the sprawling and diverse Birla business empire, has focussed attention on India's top-ranking business families. GD's advanced age and the structure of the family's business holdings have meant that there is no clear void. The Birlas nevertheless represent a fascinating saga in Indian enterprise. Page 98

**Child Labour**

The town of Tiruppur in Tamil Nadu is to hosiery what Sivakasi is to fireworks. It also shares another dubious distinction with Sivakasi—the use of child labour. Almost one-third of Tiruppur's 30,000 hosiery workers are children, most of them under 14, who work a gruelling nine-hour day in unhygienic conditions. Page 60

**Cinema**

Cover: A jubilant Kapil Dev and Mohinder Amarnath after India won the Prudential Cup

COVER PHOTOGRAPH BY SRENIK SETT

**Pondicherry**

Down south she's regarded as the biggest phenomenon to hit the film scene. Silk Smitha, the sultry, sensuous actress has almost overnight become a sensation, even outstripping established stars like Kamalahanan and Rajnikant in terms of both popularity and fees. Having conquered the south, Smitha is now making a bid to make it in Bombay by acting in Hindi films Page 136

The collapse of the coalition government in Pondicherry last week was inevitable. The Congress(I), which pulled out of the coalition, has been peeved ever since chief minister D.Ramachandran took part in the southern chief ministers' conference last March. But the Pondicherry crisis is part of a larger plan of the Congress(I) in its political strategy for the south. Page 36





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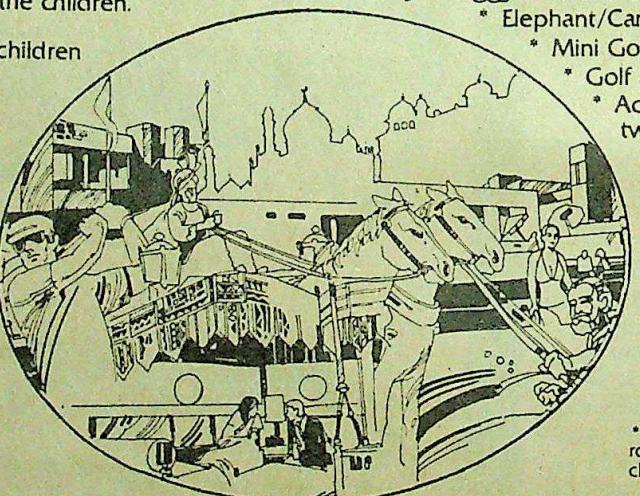
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report of the special committee set up by Indian Board of Wildlife, which says: "A photographic comparison of the sunspots, tail and eye marks of the two tigresses... categorically establishes that the man-eating tigress is not Tara", he has, presumably on the testimony of irresponsible local forestry officials, that "Tara was gunned down in November 1980." This element seeks to nullify my confident claim of successful rehabilitation of the tigress. She is in fact a fully integrated tigress at the Dudhwa National Park, and has two cubs who are now 22 months old.

*Arjan Singh*

Five years ago, a committee of top tiger experts appointed by the Government recommended that a strict watch be kept on all man-eating tigers of Dudhwa, and all confirmed man-eaters be eliminated completely. These and other constructive recommendations of the committee remain implemented, mainly due to pressure from meaning but sentimental conservationists.

Until knowledgeable game management is given preference over sentimental preservation, tigers may well continue to paradise the lives of people who live in the vicinity—and no one can blame the locals for wanting to gun down man-eaters in order to protect their families. No one would like to see tigers vanish from Indian forests, but the protection of the animal should not be at the cost of human lives.

*Giri Raj Singh*

In the modern concept of wildlife management, the excess, the old and the infirm must be culled or led—wildlife, like forestry, is a resource, its future depends on its value, and not sentiments being expressed at present.

Every man-eater that is destroyed is worth US \$25,000 to the trophy hunter. This venue can be used for effective game management.

*A.C. Kohli*

#### HELPLESS SPECTATORS

Prithipal Singh's assassination ("Murder Mania", June 15) proves that violence has become the watchword of Punjab's daily life. It may not be the work of extremists but it is a firm indication that the law and order machinery in Punjab has completely collapsed and the police force is nothing but a bunch of hapless jokers.

*Deepak Kapoor*

#### THE FINAL SOLUTION

The only solution to the problems facing Jawaharlal Nehru University ("Experiment Gone Awry", June 15) is to

summarily demolish it, as it has become another Gopala Towers.

*Srinagar*

*Asha Patnaik*

#### DRESSING DOWN

In "The Gandhis: An Indoor Plant" (June 15) Mrs Gandhi has been quoted as saying that Maneka began wearing the clothes of a 'suhagin' within 10 days of Sanjay's death. What right has Mrs Gandhi to take offence, considering that she herself dresses as elegantly as any modern young girl? The clothes she wore during her recent trip to the US are typical of her sartorial preferences. It is certainly wrong of Mrs Gandhi to criticise her daughter-in-law for doing precisely what she herself is fond of doing—dressing up.

*Bangalore*

*Kiran Kumar*

Mrs Gandhi's remarks about Maneka were petty, but Maneka should not criticise her for had she not married into the Gandhi family would she ever have had a chance to launch a career in politics? If Maneka really wants to make her mark she should do some constructive work and not just Indira-baiting.

*Chanderpur*

*T.K. Titus*

#### PATENT PROBLEMS

The brief in Trade Winds "Patent Problems" (May 31) clearly brings out the fact that Indian patent law does not provide desirable protection to the innovators, and that there has been a fall in the number of applications since 1969.

The filing of patents is an index of the innovative capability and the industrial health of a country, and fall in the number of patents should be a kind of a warning signal to planners to look into the reasons and take effective and corrective measures.

*Chandigarh*

*A.K. Lal*

#### AMERICAN DREAM

Apropos Claudia Wright's comment ("The Americans Are Coming", June 15) on the possible improvement of Indo-US relations, I don't think she is entirely right. Since Mrs Gandhi could not reconcile her international politics with her electoral policies at home, India and the US will continue with the same love-hate kind of relationship as before. Given the present state of affairs, no improvement in the status quo seems probable in the near future. The American Ambassador to India, Harry G. Barnes, is doing good work here, evidently. But one wonders whether the enthusiasm and goodwill generated by the visit of the members of the US Overseas Investment Corporation will not wear away as a result of our tardy bureaucratic procedures.

*Trivandrum*

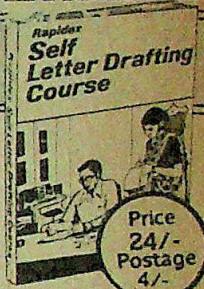
*K. Balagopal*

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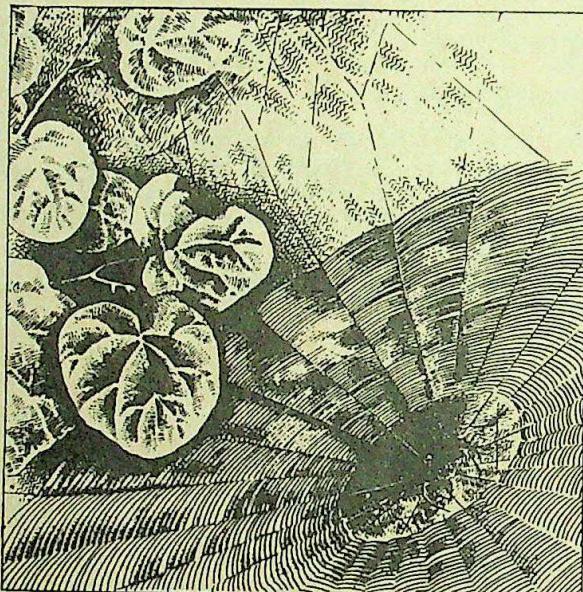
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# Separating Froth From Substance

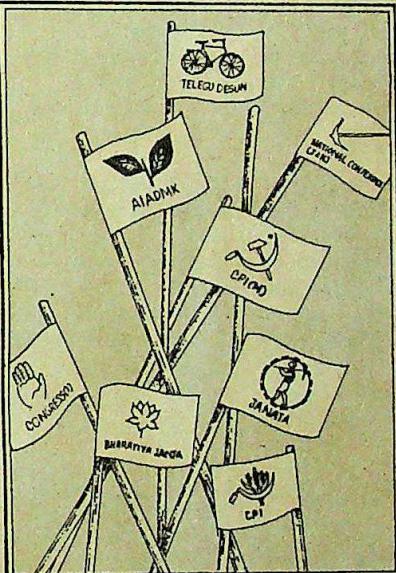
**F**EW WOULD dispute that India is in a stage of transition from a parliamentary democracy dominated by one party to a multi-party parliamentary democracy with the legislative cake more evenly shared. The Janata experiment after the Emergency was the first sign of this; the emergence of stalwart regional leadership of regional parties flourishing at the cost of the national parties is further confirmation of the shape of things to come. But if their words and actions, particularly at the hustings, are any indication, the importance of this transition seems at best to have escaped the so-called national parties. At worst, their response is to move in directions that can only have disastrous consequences for themselves and the country. That they should be alarmed is perfectly understandable, for they find the ground slipping from under their feet. That it should lead them to appeal to baser human qualities, to fan old fears and to excite new passions in their quest for votes is more than unforgivable.

There has been a deplorable appeal in recent elections to blatantly communal feelings and issues. Caste and community have long figured in electoral calculations and they continue to be important determinants in the selection of candidates. But over the years the personal appeal of individual candidates—in the case of the Congress(I), the charisma of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi—and issues, both local and national, have come to play a more decisive role. In recent elections there has been a startling regression. If Assam was something of a special case, with the elections splitting its society along the lines of community and language, the appeal of certain politicians to widespread insecurities and fears in Jammu & Kashmir was dangerous.

And who is to guarantee, for example, that when elections are held in Punjab, already struck by communal violence, the contestants there will not appeal first and foremost to religion and community over the vastly more important issues that hang over that state? The consequence of a communal electoral appeal in a state like Punjab could be horrifying, in a country with such a heterogeneous and multi-faceted society such as India's, the scope for self-interested, populist appeal is frighteningly unlimited. But if the traditional parties, notably the Congress(I), think that their salvation lies in sectoral loyalties they are headed for political suicide.

Their principal failing in recent electoral battles has been a complete inability to gain the confidence of the voter in the towns or the villages, to convince him that they are up to provid-

ing a clean and capable government. If the Congress(I) is in this respect the biggest failure it is only because from its pinnacle of power in the summer of 1980 it has nowhere to go but down; the failure, as recent elections have shown, is no less that of the other national opposition parties. The voter has chosen unambiguously for personalities, parties and programmes that appear to him to be closer to the earth, regional parties who talk his language and reflect his most immediate concerns.



**T**HERE is no way of knowing if this transition is durable or how long it will last. It is being prodded by the electorate coming out to vote in larger and larger numbers signifying a greater political consciousness. It is also sapping the vitality of the national parties, who cannot separate the froth from the substance. Mrs Gandhi's appeal to the Hindu voter in Jammu was expedient; it won her party considerable ground for the moment but quite possibly sowed the seeds of future trouble. Some people appear to think that Congress(I) victories in some Hindi speaking areas are a northern backlash against the southern defeats, and there is even talk of an emerging confrontation between Aryavarta and Dakhinatya. To the extent that such attitudes are spontaneous, they are myopic; those who encourage them for immediate gain are playing with fire.

There are key lessons here for those who would fight elections. Electoral rhetoric is all very well, but the Indian voter has time and again shown that given the time he rises quickly above sectoral and communal appeals. As political thinker George Lukacs has said, it is necessary to separate the immediate from the remote in determining the laws of social change. Unless changes occurring immediately can be distinguished from changes still to come, the whole process defies understanding. In essence, expediency leads nowhere. Politicians who wish to endure must reach the substance.

Nope of the national political parties, particularly the Congress(I), has given very much evidence of being able to cope with the transition to multi-party democracy. Unity talks among the national opposition parties have to go much further. On its part, the Congress(I) must come up with some way to live with the regional parties. The good relations it once had with some of them have soured into confrontation, most recently with the National Conference. The path of confrontation and sectarian appeal is a dead end: it betrays an inability to comprehend change even though each election points more and more clearly where the polity is moving.

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## VOICES

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» There is something harsh about the asceticism of Morarjibhai—it is the asceticism of a man who loves power and likes to wield authority over fellow men... (he) is a saintly person... but a saint weak enough to allow the love of his son to overwhelm him.

—Quark in the Sunday Review

» Yesterday we saw him casting off his costumes and donning a political mantle. Today we see him busy placing himself in a centre stage position at a conference of all those he could woo... I see danger in (N.T.) Rama Rao's antics.

—K. Karunakaran in Express Magazine

» I like her (Mrs Gandhi). I respect her. My admiration for her is deep-rooted. I admire her as a great leader. But that is a different matter.

—Prem Nazir in Sunday

» Everybody in the Congress(I) owes his or her existence to Mrs Gandhi. Because she symbolises the Congress(I), she symbolises the whole nation and the whole Congress party is Mrs Gandhi... it is Mrs Gandhi's blessings that keep us all in power.

—Dr Jagannath (Mishra) in Gentleman

» Politics is freelancing of the hardest type; for everything gets blown up in the media. Nothing is secret, nothing is private. One has to suffer criticism without foundation, at times.

—Shalinitai Patil in Eve's Weekly

» I don't really understand these national awards because, to tell the truth, half of the persons who sit in judgement over Indian films do not... possess the competence to evaluate a film correctly. —Satyajit Ray quoted in Screen

» I am the first ass among the first twenty asses.

—Kanad Chakraborty, the topper in the All Indian School Certificate Examination in The Telegraph Magazine

» I go abroad quite often. Previously at least once a year, now a bit less, because I don't like to go to places where I've to wash my own shirt.

—Manohar Malgonkar in Society

» Have we ever paused to consider why Air-India's Maharajah logo was so psychologically sound? An Indian airline would never have had so much credibility in the western world had it not been for this association with the wealth of India.

—Tara Ali Baig in The Hindustan Times Magazine

» I produce pictures to make money.... But I encourage, although I hate the idea of making, art films.

—Tarachand Barjatya in Bombay

» I don't want to play the same (roles) all my life. I don't want to parody myself. I want some exciting and unpredictable characters.

—Amitabh Bachchan in Current

» The Bombay film industry, its Kapoors and Kumars and Bachchans, have been true miracle-makers. They have been eminently successful in pulling down the nation's aesthetic standards to levels approved by the occupants of sleazy flophouses and gangster dens. —

—Ashok Mitra in The Telegraph

The airline with the most modern fleet in the world,  
still believes in the romance of travel.



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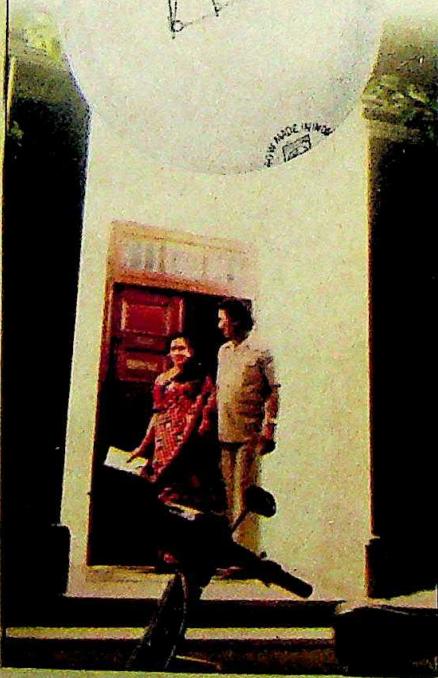
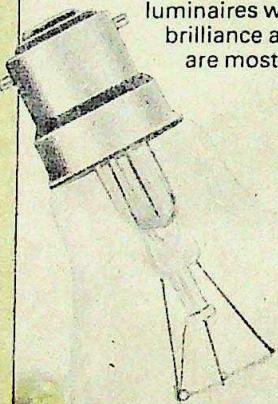
## Philips Fluorescent Lamp

The energy-saving tubelight that's ideal for your kitchen. It throws light evenly to every nook of your kitchen creating a bright, shadow-free environment to work in. Fix the fluorescent lamp only in places where you want the entire room lit up for long periods of time.



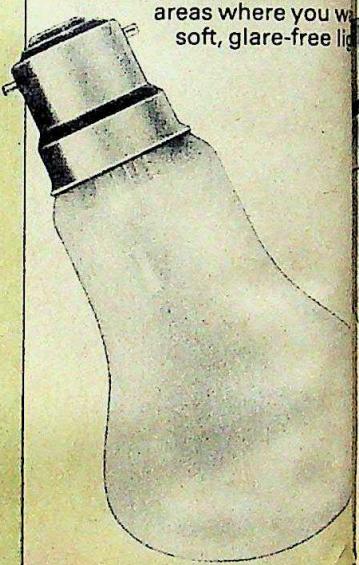
## Philips clear GLS Lamp

The clear GLS lamp gives bright light. Preferably for your porch, garage, corridors, balconies, hallways, terraces. Clear lamps are ideal in closed luminaires where brilliance and sparkle are most important.



## Philips Argenta-K Lamp

It's a new-look milky lamp that's coated by an improved process. To give uniformly soft and pleasant light. Use open luminaires in those areas where you want soft, glare-free lighting.



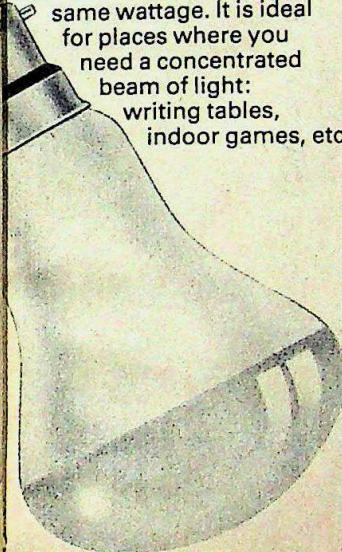
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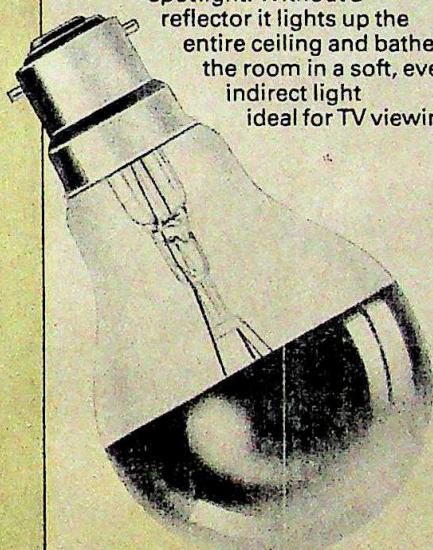
### Philips Penta Superlux Lamp

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indoor games, etc.



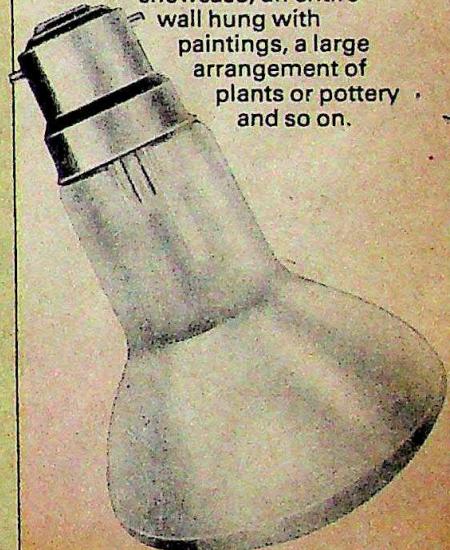
### Philips Bowl Reflector Lamp

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indirect light  
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### Philips R-20 Reflector Lamp

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plants or pottery  
and so on.



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■ History is replete with stories of great feasts where entire herds of cattle met their fate in the stomachs of guzzling men or where whole farms provided delicious fare for a table. Perhaps it is too much to expect, in these 14 per cent inflation days, that history will repeat itself—but, amazingly, it did or almost.

Gordhanram Vishnoi of

**ELEPHANT POLO**

■ Never cross an elephant. Balaraj won't, not any more. Honest. Last fortnight, Balaraj was driving a public transport bus near Meenamabakkam, Madras, when the bus hit 28-year-old Meena on her right hind foot, slightly injuring it in the process. Meena, who is a big strong elephant, didn't like that at all, and with a roar, she turned around and smashed in the windscreen,

deeply denting the bus's front. After that, she swung to the driver's window, and trumpeted loud and long, as if challenging a cowering Balaraj to come out.

Matters were not helped by Mahout Sekar who was clinging to Meena's ear and yelling to the passengers that "Meena will not go until she has killed the driver who has injured her". Balaraj was only saved because the passengers threw a human cordon aro-

und the bus and followed it up with rapid-fire Tamil exchanges—Sivaji Ganesan style—with the mahout.

Unfortunately, even as the villagers of the 85 villages—Fitakansi plus 84—had got up on the fateful day after fasting the previous day—or so mockers from villages No. 86 and 87 would have it—the police swooped down on the food and confiscated it under the Guest Control Order. However, the guests were able to eat of their fill—at a price, for the food was later auctioned by the authorities.

**HAIL HANUMAN!**

■ The monkeys of Jammu are more than usually ferocious. For years now, the people of the city have learnt to live warily with man's ancestors, turning a blind eye to sundry depredations such as clothes stolen off the washing lines, food sneaked from the table, children teased and so on.

Then, sometime ago, a

**COPS 'N' ROBBERS**

■ In Hissar, Haryana, four young men burst into a bank, brandished pistols and demanded money. The bank gave them Rs 34,750. As usual, the police arrived too late—just as in the films—and after dusting off their magnifying glasses and discovering they were concave set off in sweating pursuit. By and by, they caught up with the four robbers at Goodan village.

Their faces were suspiciously familiar, though. And, sure enough, upon close questioning, the robbers admitted that they were actually policemen dressed up as gangsters, carrying pistols and guns with no bullets in them and that the entire "exercise" was meant to find out if the police were really capable of doing their job, and how alert they were and how quickly they moved and so on. The police, the dupes that is, were not too pleased with this.

storm lashed the city, pounding the streets with rain and, more dangerous, hail. In no time at all, the monkeys presented the sorriest of faces to the world, dripping wet, constantly stoned by the hailstones. There was only one way out of the situation and, swallowing their pride and their growls, they took it.

When housewives opened their doors, they found that the animals which had only

yesterday overturned the dal pots on the stove were begging for shelter. The primates entered and curled up quietly in a corner of the house, without touching or damaging anything.

When the hailstones finally ended, their hosts opened the doors again and the monkeys raised their hands in grateful salute and went away.

*Hanuman ji ki jai!*



However, in a statement afterwards, a senior police officer said that the whole thing had been gone through to test the efficiency and efficacy of the police communication system and to gauge the preparedness of the bank authorities. What is curious is that the police had to resort to a sham raid to test their men—aren't there enough bona fide robberies around, or could those dipping crime figures really be correct?

—Compiled by JAGANNATH DUBASHI

CHANDRA SHEKHAR

# End Of An Odyssey

*"Six months ago I began Bharat Yatra—to meet, to walk along, to live with and listen to those Indian masses who have time but no other resources to share, what they experience and what they consider should be done to improve their lot...."*

—Chandra Shekhar at the end of his padayatra

OME called him the marathon man of Indian politics. Others thought he was a naively seeking idealist who sought in vain. But over 4,000 km and nearly six months later when Janata Party President Chandra Shekhar reached New Delhi last week—his craggy face more care-worn, his calloused and blistered feet bandaged, the reception was tumultuous. His original band of 30 walkers had swelled to a determined brigade of 300 on the outskirts of the capital; over a thousand people walked with him from the Okhla suburb to Nizamuddin in the city; nearly 15,000 were with him at Rajghat where he offered, Jayaprakash Narayan-style, a pledge to the nation; and over 40,000 showed up at the Ramlila Grounds where his stirring call to the youth of the country asked them to return to the villages and fight specific problems of water scarcity, medicare, education and delayed justice.

Chandra Shekhar's long walk may have started out as personal odyssey, transformed along the way into political spectacle and ended up as a gimmick for politicians of every hue to use. Still, it was a phenomenal effort on the part of one man to make mass contact on a plainly human level; it was a tremendous feat to try and see firsthand what was going on in the country. And the importance of the Yatra bandwagon lies not in its symbolic or political value but in its chronicle of on-the-spot accounts of deprivation and want. "It made me think," says Chandra Shekhar, "where did we go wrong? Why did we go wrong?"

Village after village he came upon children who had never been to school. He saw children of five and six married, with little girls bearing their husbands' names tattooed on their bodies. He met nursing mothers and pregnant women "in scanty clothes and in such poor health that it would indeed be a marvel if they produce living children...the intensity of the pain and agony being suffered by the poor cannot be explained in words. It has to be seen to be believed." The fact that his account is an eyewitness account, that his questions, cutting out the convolutions of political jargon, remain

searchingly simple, and his motivations were private and against his party's wishes, make his achievement laudable. And the widespread response to it entirely understandable.

**Diversity:** All sorts of people caught up with him in all kinds of places. When Suketu Shah, Harvard-educated son of industrialist Viren Shah first read about the Yatra in a small newspaper paragraph in January, he went along to check it out for himself. "I was sceptical," says 28-year-old Shah, who is a Bombay-based businessman, "but I thought, here's a politician who's reasonably honest, charismatic, dedicated and whose slate, among everyday politicians, is comparatively clean. So I went." Having walked with him in various places for about 20 days, Shah says he acutely "felt part of the Indian scene:

if people like me start saying that I must go to business and leave someone else to run the country then I must be a foolish man and even more foolish businessman."

Such idealistic conviction runs through the masses of Yatra volunteers who caught up with it at all stages; they're mostly young thinking and motivated individuals, many of whom participated in the JP movement. Ranjana Kumari, a senior research assistant at Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University, walked with Chandra Shekhar first in Kerala and later in Madhya Pradesh: "It's the first time since 1977 that a politician is interested in contacting the people directly. It's the first time since then that someone is talking about issues and programmes."

Though a whole subterranean variety

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Chandra Shekhar at journeys' end in Delhi: marching with the masses

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political "leaders" have resurfaced to lumber on the Yatra bandwagon—Raj Tarain, for example, in an engaging scarlet scarf—there are others who remain on-party members and see it purely as a cause worthy of backing. Former Union minister and ambassador to Moscow I.K. Gujral, for instance, who helped organise the New Delhi reception says that the significance of the Yatra has been crucial at two levels: in its appeal to the youth from whom the response has been enormous; and the spontaneity of the overall response it has evoked. Speaking of it as a movement which has managed "without resources", Gujral points out that the extensive—and often elaborate—arrangements for the Yatra's New Delhi ending were financed by several groups: the lighting of Turkman gate houses, which form a backdrop to the Tamliha Grounds, in colours of the Janata Party flag was undertaken entirely by local residents of the area. So was the organisation of the rally.

**Significance:** Popular response is all very well. In cold political terms, where has the Yatra got Chandra Shekhar and his party? At his rally Chandra Shekhar was far from shirking the political cause-and-effect of his long march. "There are those who say that I'm not really interested in politics. I want to say that I am more involved in politics than ever before." And the significance of ending the Yatra on June 25, the eighth anniversary of the declaration of the Emergency, was recapitulated by Karnataka chief minister Ramakrishna Hegde who recalled the days of the original Janata Party's formation and its unfortunate disintegration. "But," he said, "we have all learnt from our past, and face the future with renewed commitment."

Dissensions in the Janata Party itself have temporarily cooled with the successful completion of the padayatra. There are those who still doubt Chandra Shekhar's intrinsic toughness as a political leader. "He is soft-centred enough to allow all kinds of

mavericks into the rank and file of the party," said a member of the party's national executive, eyeing the row upon row of has-beens on stage—but others claim that his amazing long march across the length of the sub-continent has toughened him. A hard political interior or exterior, however, isn't the heart of the matter.

Chandra Shekhar's acid test has just begun. Will he be able to mobilise the response into action? Will he and his cast of thousands return to the terrain they have traversed, five young men to a village as they promise, to redress the misery they witnessed? Will an infrastructure emerge out of the tide of sympathy and goodwill? For the man who has covered so long a distance on foot, the road ahead may prove harder and meaner and politically precipitous. Chandra Shekhar's voyage so far has enabled him to successfully report on the health of the nation. Will the route he now takes help him restore it?

—SUNIL SETHI



Chandra Shekhar with Hegde, Delhi Janata Party chief Kishore Lal and supporters: triumphant return

PUNJAB

# Back On The Brink

TWO WEEKS after the Akalis' 'rail roko' agitation was abruptly halted by the Centre's timely decision to cancel all trains, Punjab was being readied for a showdown. Bloodshed had been avoided but the possibility of a return to the negotiating table also ended. Landing in New Delhi last fortnight from her European safari, the prime minister minced no words at Palam Airport; renewing the offensive against the Akali agitation, Mrs Gandhi angrily remarked: "There is no need for any fresh initiative. The country shall have to decide how to deal with agitations trying to disrupt its unity. I want a categorical answer from the Opposition and the Akalis on this question." The tenor of her remarks was indicative of the Centre's evolving hard line.

The battle in Punjab was no longer a

game of political brinkmanship or a war of attrition. It has become a blatantly militant battle, with both sides gearing for serious action. The state Government in conjunction with the Centre has come up with the following proposals to reinforce its stand:

► Executive magistrates in Punjab will have judicial powers to conduct summary trials and issue imprisonment orders up to three years. The only other state where magistrates have such authority is Assam.

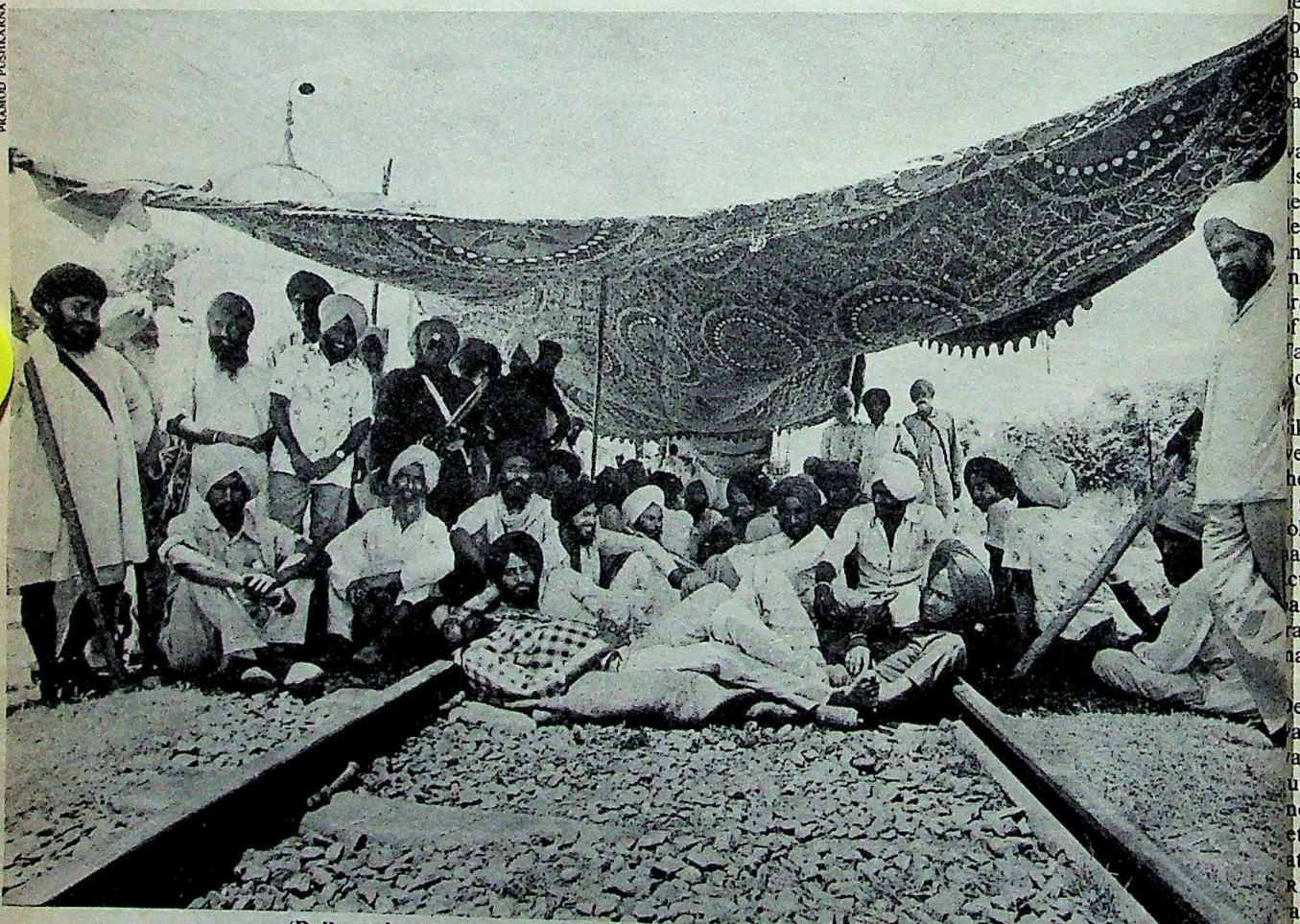
► The state Government has cancelled the arms licences of about 500 people, and ordered the manufacturing and possession of illegal arms an offence with an enhanced punishment of at least three years.

► Twenty-five BSF and CRPF battalions now stationed in Punjab will be retained. And the army and air force will render non-combatant help during further agitations.

► A general upgrading of the Punjab

police hierarchy will result in one director general of police and six inspectors general of police. Among the most controversial decisions has been to create a new post of inspector general (special duty) to which Bhinder, Delhi's former police commissioner, has been appointed.

**Political Appointment:** Bhinder's appointment, to deal exclusively with Sikh extremists, has special political significance as it is both an effort to rehabilitate him since his fall from grace last year (INDIA TODAY, January 15, 1982) and a recognition of his chieftain status with its fiercely loyalist connection to Mrs Gandhi. Sources suggest that Bhinder has been given overall charge of the state's law enforcement agencies. Interestingly, the *dera* or religious seat of the "Minister Khomeini" Bhindranwale at Chowk Maff to E falls in the constituency of Bhinder's world Sukhbans Kaur, who is the Congress(II) mind next Al roko' w can't go old IND att Ext andi a also get new den demand and an a shrine ranwal of Punja Balwan torn-out Unikh lea were cle he Cent result o' agad rep action wathy ha ral Gov major ha Inte Delhi or arned c as said ut atte and rail between athered RPF and ay systay, with



'Rail roko' agitators outside Bhatta Sahib gurudwara near Ropar: checkmated

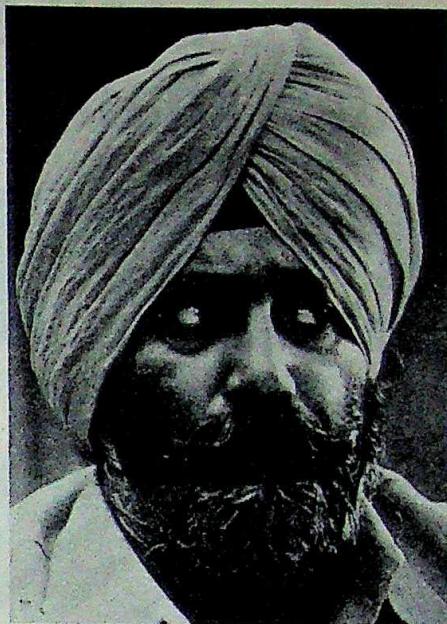
om Gurdaspur. Political necessity will demand high-risk action from Bhinder, whose transfer to the crucial position in Punjab is viewed in New Delhi as part of the Centre's offensive against the Akalis. Soon after Bhinder's appointment the Centre gave another indication of its determination when it sacked state PCC(I) chief Hansraj Sharma and appointed R.L. Bhatia, MP, in his place.

The Akalis reacted to Mrs Gandhi's statement and these moves by rejecting Union Home Minister P.C. Sethi's invitation for talks for the third time running. In chaste Gurukh, Akali Dal President Sant Harib Singh Longowal's rejoinder stated: "The Centre has sacrificed our demand for him since justice and the overall interest of the country TODAY, for the sake of personal and party interest. This attitude is unfortunate for the country and for all of us." Longowal's sentiments suggest he had the hard feelings of other Sikh leaders. "We have made our position on our demands absolutely clear," said former chief of the Minister Prakash Singh Badal before flying back to East European countries to promote world peace, "let the Government spell out Congress(I)'s mind clearly." He further warned that the next Akali action after the abortive 'rail roko' would be an equally strong one. "We can't go back to taking minor action," he told INDIA TODAY, "this is going to be a long battle."

Extremist leaders like Jagdev Singh Talwandi and Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale were also getting ready for battle by tagging on new demands to the existing ones. Talwandi demanded a separate personal law for Sikhs and an assurance of their special status to be enshrined in the Constitution, while Bhindranwale emphasised the Sikh domination of Punjab. "These meetings and letters," said Talwandi cuttingly, "are Mrs Gandhi's orn-out gimmicks."

**United Opposition:** All factions of the Sikh leadership, moderate and extremist, were clearly uniting in their quest to oppose the Centre. Partially, the stiffened stance was a result of being checkmated in their 'rail roko' agitation. Though the Akali leadership had repeatedly stressed that the Centre's action was a victory for them, popular sympathy had obviously transferred to the Central Government for saving Punjab from a major holocaust.

Intelligence reports pouring into New Delhi on the eve of the 'rail roko' stir had warned of large-scale violence. The Akalis, it was said, would not only cause traffic blocks but attempt major damage to railway tracks and railway stations. Armed confrontation between the large crowds of militant Akalis gathered in Punjab's towns and the surplus RPF and BSF contingents guarding the railway system would have been the order of the day, with a death toll more grievous than the



Bhinder: political significance

earlier 'rasta roko' stir on April 4 which resulted in 23 dead.

**Resolute Action:** Such widespread violence prompted the Union Cabinet to act with resolve: Union Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee urged CPI(M) MP Hardeep Singh Surjeet to intervene on his behalf. The Akalis ignored Surjeet's mediation; but apparently when later told by Rajiv Gandhi that the Government was fully prepared to respond if violence could be checked, Badal and former Akali minister S.S. Dhindsa dashed to Delhi. While the Centre cancelled rail traffic, the Akalis called off the agitation altogether.

Peace in the Punjab, however, still remains elusive. Sporadic killings, shootouts and robberies continue to paralyse everyday life in parts of the state. Incidents of terrorism and violence continue unchecked since the 'rail roko' agitation passed off peacefully. Some major incidents since June 17 include:

- The killing of Police Inspector R.C. Sharda by two extremists on a motorcycle at Phagwara police station.
- Looting of four banks—three in the Hoshiarpur-Phagwara area and one in Ferozepur—at gunpoint.
- The axing to death of a bus-conductor by a Nihang who was asked to buy a ticket.
- A communal clash in the town of Mallerkotla resulting in two dead and several injured.
- Bomb explosions in the offices of the Jullundur daily *Pratap* and the Congress Bhavan in Chandigarh.
- Rioting in the vicinity of a temple in Jullundur when Nihangs attempted to hoist

their sacred flag.

► Attempted murder of a DSP's son in Amritsar.

**Demoralised:** While the violence continues, the Punjab police watch helplessly. Says a senior police official: "The force is so demoralised today that it takes no notice of these incidents—it is as if the communal outbursts and killings were happening in another world."

Akali leaders, on the other hand, are at pains to point out that Mrs Gandhi's procrastination over a solution is a studied attempt to advance her personal politics elsewhere. Says one: "It suits her political strategy to go everywhere in the country and claim the Sikh extremists are holding her to ransom. It wins her sympathy among Hindus in the north. Having lost the south, she wants to use the Punjab issue to her advantage by riding the wave of Hindu chauvinism in the north." In off-record utterances, the Akalis also point out that as the impasse becomes longer drawn-out they lose control of the militant sections of the leadership. Says Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) President Gurcharan Singh Tohra: "Injustice, especially delayed injustice, breeds contempt for the law. Mrs Gandhi must immediately put an end to the injustice."

Contempt for the law is only too evident in the latest copy of the SGPC bulletin which carries a notice from the Khalsa Dewan Society, Vancouver, urging the acceptance of Akali demands by Mrs Gandhi, asking for donations to the SGPC from Sikhs all over the world and urging them "to gather under one banner for the liberation of Punjab, their motherland".

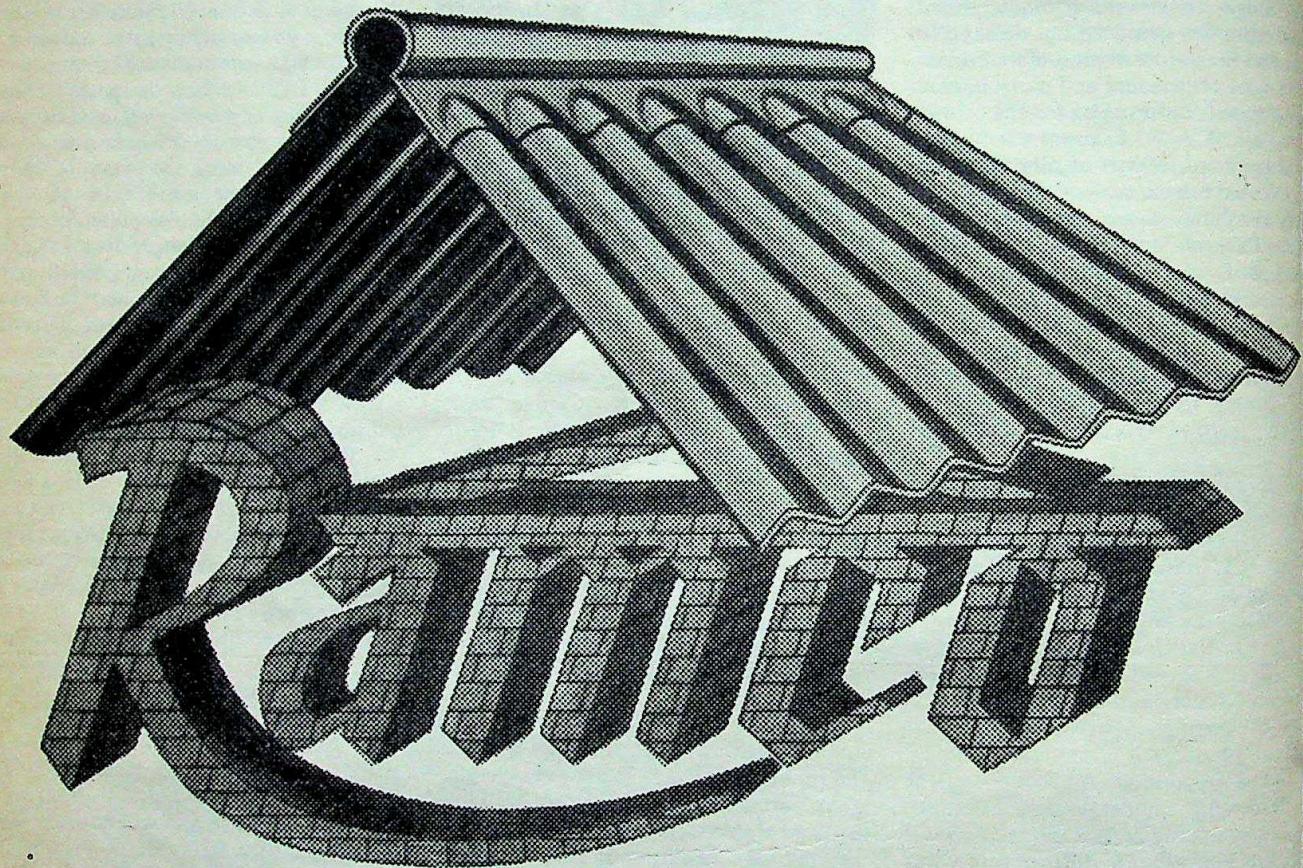
**Offer Rejected:** The Akalis describe Sethi's renewed offer of referring the Chandigarh issue and the territories dispute to a tribunal as an effort "to confuse issues" and "shut the door on negotiations". Both Tohra and former finance minister Balwant Singh came on record last week to say that the Chandigarh issue could not be referred to a tribunal "since it historically belonged to Punjab"; but the river waters dispute could be referred to a tribunal provided there were no pre-conditions and the decision on Punjab's share of water be made from the period prior to the state's reorganisation. It was, they claimed, their legal and constitutional right.

Such being the bargaining positions, the deadlock in Punjab shows no sign of resolving. In fact, psychologically and politically, the confrontation has crossed the point of no return. After long months of escalating tension, Punjab is once again back on the brink.

—SUNIL SETHI and GOBIND THUKRAL  
in Chandigarh

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KARNATAKA

# Withdrawal Symptoms

WITH the six-month-old Janata Government in Karnataka announcing last fortnight that it would hold elections to civic bodies on July 31 and August 8, political parties in the state have already begun preparing for the crucial bout that would determine the stability of the government and the mood of Karnataka's 7 crore population.

The first salvo was fired when last week, the Karnataka Kranti Ranga (KKR) headed by the controversial S. Bangarappa formally ended its honeymoon with the Janata Party when its parliamentary board announced that it had withdrawn its support to the Government and its six Legislative Assembly members would now sit in the Opposition benches. The decision came as no surprise, specially after the KKR was trounced ignominiously in the two Assembly by-elections held in May, one of which saw Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde winning by a thumping majority from the Kanakapura constituency (INDIA TODAY June 15). Nor will it in any way shake the fledgling Janata Government, which, excluding the KKR support enjoys a majority of 127 members in the 25-strong lower house. Said Hegde: "We never considered the Kranti Ranga to be our supporters."

But the KKR move was obviously directed towards a come-back in the civic polls by veering the pitch for the Janata Government. The KKR is pinning its hopes on the simmering discontent among farmers in the hilly district of the state. Said parliamentary board Chairman Y. Ramachandra: "The Janata Government has betrayed the farmers, and has not been able to stop the oppression let loose on them. We fully support the farmers' struggle and this is one of the reasons we are pulling out."

**Stirring Trouble:** Meanwhile the Raitha Sangha, the main farmers' association in the state, has threatened to launch a state-wide agitation if the Government decides to forcibly collect crop loans due from farmers, totalling almost Rs 65 crore. In the next month the KKR would do its best to stir up as much discontent as possible among the farmers. But anticipating trouble, the Government wisely decided to postpone the civic polls in the hilly districts of Uttara Kannada, Shimoga, Chickmagalur and Dakshina Kannada ostensibly because of the onset of the monsoon.

The Congress(I) party which has been in tarry ever since its shock defeat in the

Assembly elections last January has finally pulled up its socks last fortnight and announced that K.H. Patil, a veteran Congressman, would be the new Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee(I) (KPCC-I) chief replacing the unsuccessful K. Mallanna. Patil,



Bangarappa: calculated move

who has held the post before, when the late Devraj Urs headed a Congress(I) ministry in the state, is known to be a fiery politician and has so far not identified himself with any particular group. The decision has come as a blow to former chief minister Gundu Rao, who has been lobbying stringently for his own candidate Dharam Singh. Rao came out of his self-imposed hibernation after his stunning defeat, and since last month has rejoined active politics but without much success. His camp has been making a determined bid to oust Veerappa Moily from the leadership of the party in the Assembly. But with Patil's election, Moily is anyway going to play second fiddle in state politics.

While the move to bring in a new party chief is a positive step to pull the party out of its present state of disorganisation, Patil will have to work hard to prevent the cracks in its ranks from widening. The powerful Vokkalgiga community lobby in the party headed by the constant dissident H.C. Srikantiah is unlikely to give him much cooperation, especially because Patil pipped Srikantiah to the



Patil (left) and Moily: reorganising

post. Patil will also have to face the sniping of Gundu Rao's camp which is not likely to allow him to function in peace. It will need all Patil's experience to steer the Congress(I) out of its present troubled political waters. Patil, who belongs to the minority Reddy community, may use the help of Bangarappa whom he has worked with before, and together they are capable of stirring up enough trouble for the Janata Party members to sit up and watch their backs.

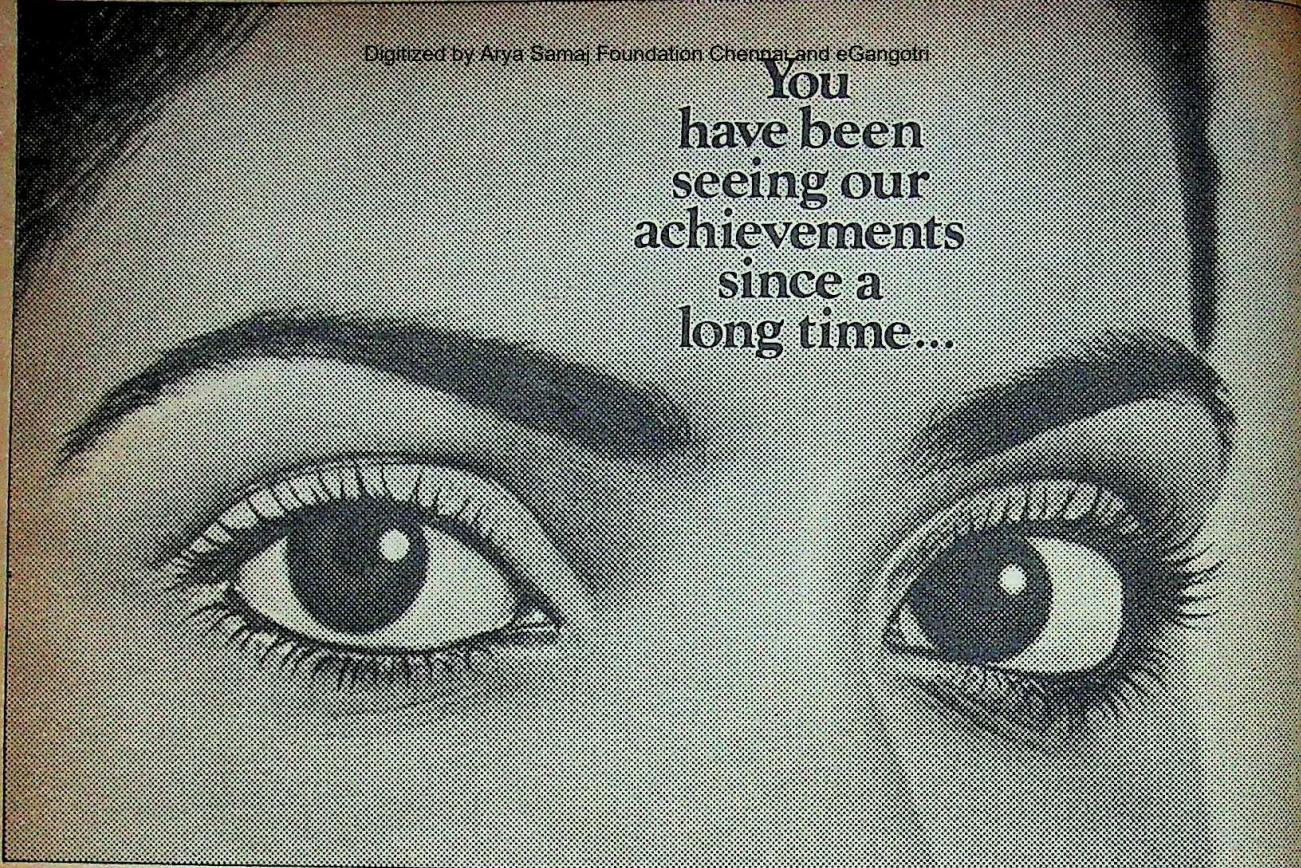
**Strengthening Position:** So far the Janata Government headed by Hegde has been calling all the shots. But knowing its inherent instability, the party has been trying to consolidate its position in the Assembly. Even before the KKR pulled out of the ministry, state Janata Party President D. Ranganath announced that the 14 independent MLA's who are now associate members of the party would soon become full-fledged members. If this crucial event takes place the Janata Party would bolster its strength in the Assembly from 88 to 102.

Apart from this, Janata Party already enjoys the support of 18 Bharatiya Janata Party MLA's and three each from the Communist Party of India and Communist Party of India-Marxist and a lone AIADMK MLA. Veerappa Moily predictably let out a vituperative tirade against the move by the party to induct independent MLA's and called it the "height of corruption and direct defection". This was a dig at the Janata Government's anti-defection bill passed recently which is awaiting presidential assent. The carrot which Hegde is holding out to the independent MLA's is the posts of chairmen of various boards and corporations which are yet to be announced.

Hegde himself has been moving with increasing confidence in the past month after his resounding victory in the Kanakapura by-election. Moily fell into his trap when he triumphantly revealed that the Centre had issued a show-cause notice to the state Government asking it why the Reserve Bank of India should not be asked to stop payments of cheques issued to the state because it had accumulated a total deficit of Rs 215 crore. Pointing out that the overdraft of the state was only Rs 33 crore, Hegde proceeded to systematically ridicule Moily's charges and ended up calling him a "day-dreamer". Asserted Hegde: "My Government will not be shaken by anybody whether by the Congress(I) or any individual, and it will stay as long as the people want it to stay. I do not need a certificate of any individual or party about our performance. What I value is the satisfaction of the people." And how satisfied the people are with the Janata Government's performance will be known when the results of the civic bodies elections are announced.

—RAJ CHENGAPPA

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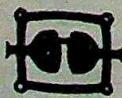
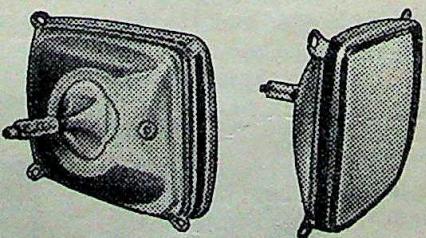


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KARNATAKA

# Language Politics

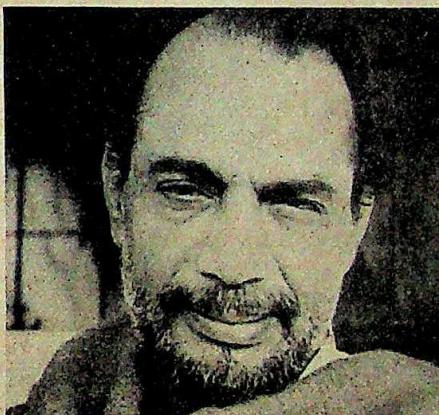
IF FORMER chief minister R. Gundu Rao was accused of converting the fight for primacy of Kannada, the state language, into a literary time bomb, Ramakrishna Hegde, who heads the month-old Janata Government, instead defusing the issue, seems to be only hastening its explosion. Last fortnight his Cabinet took what is now considered the hasty decision of banning new English medium primary schools from being set up in the state. Ex-Information Minister M. Raghupathy: "We had promised to give prime importance to Kannada in the state. This is the first step."

But many political observers regard it as the first step towards potential disaster. Commenting on the decision, the *Deccan Herald*, the state's largest-circulated English newspaper, said angrily: "Far from promoting the interest of the Kannada-speaking population, this suicidal policy will cut the very ground from under the feet of the children of Karnataka. One shudders to think of the repercussions, when a few years from now, a whole generation of citizens in this state will flood the employment market in a desperate bid to find local jobs, since they will have no takers elsewhere."

Nor did the Government receive a sympathetic response from the agitators who have been demanding full implementation of the Gokak Committee report. The Gokak Committee, formed two years ago by the Gundu Rao government, had recommended that Kannada be the sole first language in the educational syllabi in the state, and after a despread agitation had broken out, Rao reluctantly decided to implement the report. Last fortnight the Writers and Artists Forum, backed by eminent Kannada litterateurs such as Gopalakrishna Adiga and Masti Venkatesha Iyengar, went on a relay hunger strike demanding that the Government implement the Gokak Committee report without further delay. Said chief convenor G.K. Satya: "The decision to ban new English medium schools is an eyewash meant only to delay the real issue, which is giving Kannada prime importance in the educational syllabi. The Government is vacillating."

**Political Capital:** Meanwhile, the disunited factions in the Congress(I) are busy plotting as to how to make capital from the issue. The Gundu Rao-F.M. Khan clique, which has been lying low for the past six months licking its wounds, has now decided

to come out into the open. Not only are the duo actively lobbying to oust Veerappa Moily, the leader of the Congress(I) Legislature Party, from his unenviable post, but also to see that their own man takes over as the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee(I) president. As a direct indication of their return to politicking, Khan, Rao's strongman, held a press conference in Bangalore last week, in which he lashed out at the Government for the ban. Said Khan: "It is unconstitutional. The Government must allow English medium schools to come up even in rural areas." To which Hegde retorted sarcastically: "How did F.M. Khan suddenly materialise? Doesn't he know that public memory is not so short? He is better advised



Hegde: in a tight spot

to keep himself under hibernation."

Hegde, too, would be better advised to tread carefully with the language policy in the state. A clear indication of the Government's unbalanced decision was the fact that out of the 35,143 primary schools in the state, only 477 were English medium, and of these, 243 are in Bangalore, the Janata Party's strongest base. If the Government is keen on implementing its avowed policy of giving Kannada prime importance in the state, it is certainly going about it the wrong way. There are 2,833 Urdu medium primary schools, apart from 1,032 Marathi schools, 264 Tamil and 115 Telugu medium schools. There seems to be no reason to single out only the English schools for the ban, because, as the Writers and Artists Forum argues, it forms only a quarter of the total problem. They feel that the Government should have banned all other language medium schools from being set up. To which Raghupathy, who has been caught with his foot in his mouth on many occasions, said vaguely: "We will do it slowly."

**Quandary:** The Janata Government is caught in a pincer by the language tussle. Claiming to be a national party, it cannot advocate chauvinism that ultimately leads to regionalism, nor can it ignore the fact that the language issue could make the voters biased if not handled properly. So far, the Janata Government has been going out of its way to tell the people that it would not ignore their sentiments about Kannada. As soon as the party came to power in January last, Hegde announced that Kannada would be the official language of administration at all levels in the state. Five months later, although the decision has been implemented, the bureaucracy is still labouring through the complexities of writing all correspondence and decisions in Kannada. As another sop, Hegde announced that all boards and nameplates would be only in Kannada.

But these decisions fail to cover up the fact that the Government has yet to take a strong stand about the implementation of the Gokak Committee report. So far it has been taking shelter under the fact that nine institutions have filed a writ in the High Court against the previous government's order to make Kannada the sole first language in the educational syllabus. The High Court has stayed the government order. The Gokak agitators have told the Government that the stay applies only for nine institutions, and it should therefore go ahead and carry out the government order in all other schools and colleges. To which Hegde cautiously says: "There is no use implementing the government order till the stay is lifted, because all the other institutions would also run to the High Court." In the meanwhile, the language time bomb is steadily ticking away.

—RAJ CHENGAPPA

## MAHARASHTRA

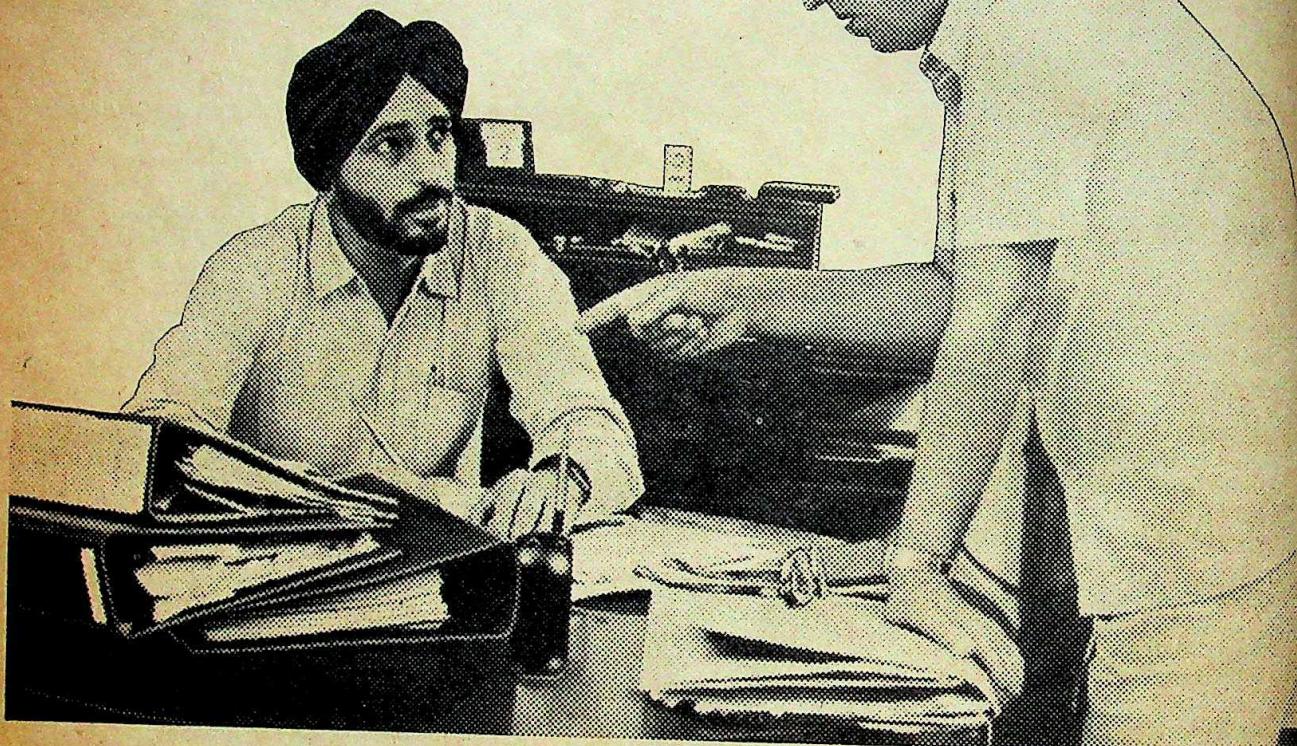
# Dalit Anger

EVERY morning, Dalit men and women gather around statues of Lord Buddha and Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar. They light lamps and offer flowers to these statues, which they have put up in all their villages. The Dalits, in the past, have made it abundantly clear that this is one territory where no one trespasses. So, last fortnight, when the police removed a bust of Dr Ambedkar recently installed on the Bombay-Agra national highway, right at the entrance of Nasik, furious Dalits came running angrily out on the streets demonstrating against what they called a "sacrilegious act of the Government claiming to be secular".

The matter didn't end there. By sunrise, over 4,000 men and women had collected

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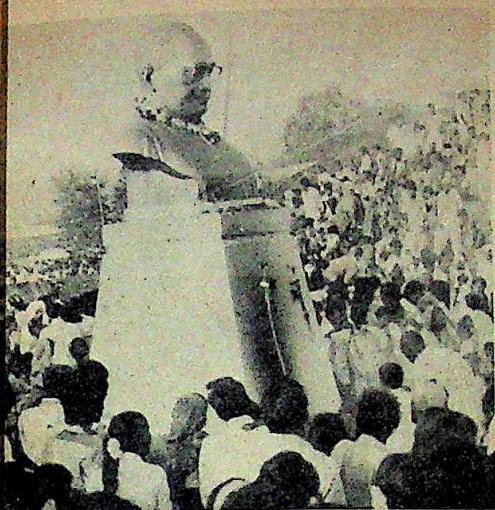


The Chief Coordinator

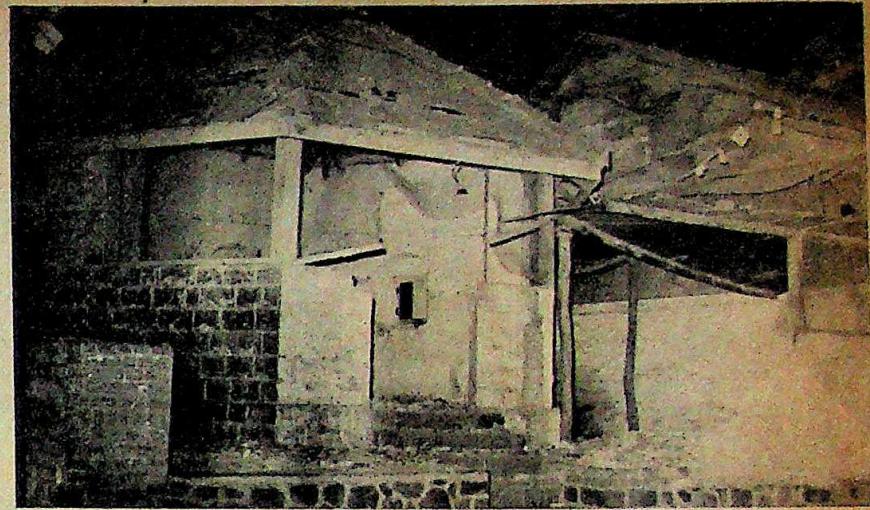
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Ambedkar's statue (left) and a police station burnt by an angry mob: outraged sentiments



together to go to the collectorate and let the authorities know just how they felt. But even before they could reach, the incensed crowd stoned shops, show-rooms and cars parked on the roadside, set fire to tea stalls, and according to Shantarambapu Wavre, Congress(I) MLA from Nasik, even tried to molest women at bus stands.

**Backlash:** On their part, non-Dalits—mostly Marathas—were also unwilling to take this Dalit militancy lying down. After reports of the street stoning reached them, a 20,000-strong crowd of non-Dalits spread like wildfire over Nasik, assaulting the Dalit localities of Mota Rajwada and Mahalaxmi. Said Savitabai Jadhav, 52, whose hut had been broken by the angry mob: "A crowd screaming *Jai Shivaji, Jai Bhavani* with spears and unsheathed swords, crowbars and orange flags assaulted our *basti*." The crowd then walked into the house of Subhash Jhadav, a *fauji javan* and kicked around everything in sight, including idols and photographs of Lord Buddha, Dr Ambedkar and even Lord Shiva, recalls his brother Ramesh. Said Wavre: "The crowd was hell bent on setting fire to Dalit locality. I had to use every trick I learnt in my public life to persuade the crowd to desist from its set course."

The district authorities in the meantime remained remarkably casual about the whole affair. Madhav Ire, a government employee, complained that for three days not a single policeman came to their rescue, nor any ruling Congress(I) worker come to enquire about their condition. And said Wavre: "The collector was out of town and the SP had gone to play badminton when I rang them up in the morning." Curiously enough, the Dalit community, although divided on most matters, unanimously hold district authorities responsible for last fortnight's violence in the holy city of Nasik which left

29 injured and three dead.

**Fanaticism:** This is not the first time the Dalits have been in trouble. Last month, the screening of Richard Attenborough's film *Gandhi* in Nagpur had to be suspended because Dalit Panthers found it highly objectionable that the film made no mention of Dr Ambedkar. A float depicting the life of Lord Buddha had to be removed from a Ramnavmi procession because some Dalit organisations claimed that Buddha was "our God" and not of the Hindus.

Yet another internal crisis is eating up Dalit strength. The neo-Buddhists who embraced the religion 26 years ago and the militant Dalits are hopelessly divided—both socially and politically. The Republican Party established by Dr Ambedkar has split repeatedly into as many as six factions. Although they all swear by Dr Ambedkar's name, it has clearly not helped them much to unite politically. As if internal disunity is not enough, caste Hindus' tampering is enough to make the Dalits see red.

**Heightening Crisis:** Meanwhile, tension continued to mount between the two communities as was evident in Nasik. The city was decked with orange and blue flags, almost as if celebrating a festival. Actually the flags were the war banners of the Hindu Ekta Sangathan, Yuva Bahujana Samaj and Maratha Mahasangh on the one side (represented by orange flags) and several Dalit organisations on the other (represented by blue flags). Maratha Mahasangh is hell bent on opposing reservation for Scheduled Castes, for pointing out which Dalit managed to get out-of-turn promotion or jumped the queue for admission to college. Said Govind Swarup, the collector: "Why should we consult Dalit leaders when they did not bother to consult us before installing the statue?"

The Dalits, too, are in no mood to listen

to sober counsels especially after the way opposition party leaders have treated their demand for renaming Marathwada University after Dr Ambedkar. Said Ramesh Jhadav, president of Samyak Samaj, a Dalit organisation: "Even after the unanimous resolution of the Maharashtra Assembly, the Government has failed to change the name. Nobody has any respect for our aspirations, our sentiments. Everybody wants to use us at the time of election and therefore pays only lip sympathy." The time, obviously, was ripe for the open confrontation that came about two weeks ago—but, what was also frighteningly clear, was that this was neither the first, nor was it going to be the last.

—NIRMALA CHINU PANCHAL in Nasik

## BOMBAY

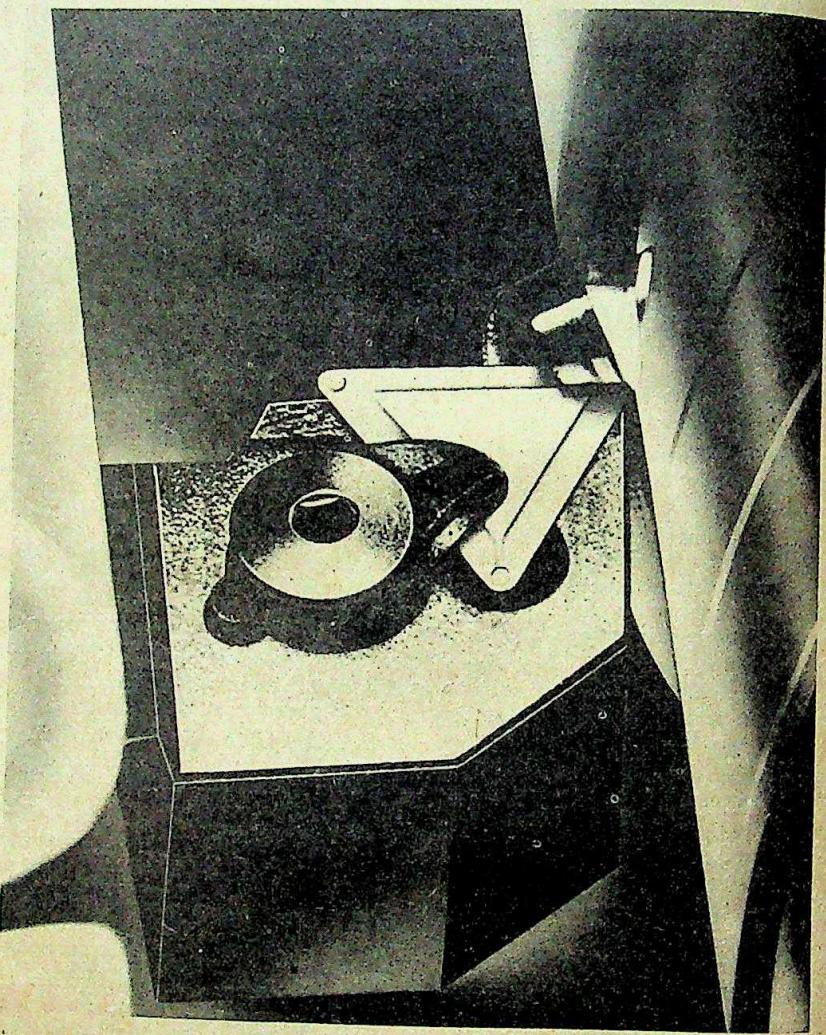
# Short Changed

**I**T ISN'T inflation alone that has short changed the citizens of Bombay. A new peril has made for lighter pockets, quite literally, with a severe coin shortage sweeping the city. Last month, from the posh Cafe Galleries grocery at Breach Candy to tiny retailers at Kalbadevi, shopkeepers in the city were beginning to round off their prices to the nearest whole number to avoid paying out coins. Aarey milk booth operators refused to give milk to anybody who couldn't tender the exact charges. And many of the 39 lakh passengers who travel daily on the Bombay Electric Supply and Transport (BEST) buses had to be satisfied with an IOU scribbled hastily on the back of the ticket. Never before, perhaps, has the city faced such an acute shortage of coins and small change.

For small-time hoarders and racketeers, though, the coin scarcity has ironically

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**NARSI STORE**

The BEST advertisement (left) and a restaurant's change coupons: coin crunch

opened up lively new avenues for making a quick buck. Hole-in-the-wall shops at Kalbadevi, Mohammad Ali Road and markets in Dadar and Ghatkopar switched over to a thriving trade in small change, and 5, 10 and 25 paise coins were selling at a premium ranging from 15 to 25 per cent. On the corner of Zakaria Masjid Road, a tiny shop front made a speedy change from freight brokerage for Mayur Roadways to dealing in small coins, and last fortnight quoted a premium which was 5 per cent higher than only a month earlier. Admitted the paunchy proprietor: "How do you expect me to give you the coins at 15 taka (per cent) now, I am buying my own coins at that price. You pay me Rs 120 and you can have Rs 100 worth of coins. I have no time to waste in bargaining."

**Devious Practices:** Workers of the Bombay Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) tried to break up the illicit coin trade with a series of demonstrations against coin dealers in Kalbadevi last April, but the only effect of this was that dealers had become more wary. Said Kirit Somaiya, general secretary of the BJP Bombay unit: "It is surprising that in spite of our repeated protests the Reserve Bank has not solved this grave problem. All sorts of illegal practices are being encouraged because of the coin shortage."

By last fortnight, however, Bombay shopkeepers had devised ingenious but equally devious ways of beating the coin crunch. Restaurants and tea-shops around the city first experimented with giving patrons toffees and boiled sweets in lieu of

exact change. When consumer resistance made this impractical, restaurateurs and retailers promptly followed up by printing coupons in different denominations—a violation of currency control legislation—which could be squared up against future purchases.

Last month, the practice was so widespread that even the MLA hostel canteen was issuing coupons in lieu of change. In congested districts like Lower Parel, "vyapari mandals" whose membership included all the shops of the area got together to print common coupons, creating a parallel currency which had all but replaced minted coins.

**Disturbed Commuters:** Perhaps worst-hit by the acute coin shortage were BEST and the suburban railway system. Railway clerks at ticket windows were increasingly turning away commuters who came without exact fare. BEST, however, was finding it harder to cope. Said H.C. Advani, BEST's chief development adviser: "Every time there is a coin shortage the citizens of Bombay feel that the one place they will be able to get their change is on our buses. But the simple fact is that we simply cannot solve the coin demand of 40 lakh passengers daily; it is for the Reserve Bank to increase supply sufficiently to overcome this shortage."

In desperation, the organisation began pleading through advertisements that passengers tender exact change for tickets. For the ones who could not, a complicated system of reimbursement was revived: a scribbled IOU from the conductor on the tic-

ket, if registered with the nearest BEST chowki, would in due course result in the passenger receiving postage stamps worth the outstanding amount in the mail. If more than a rupee is outstanding, the undertaking promises to remit a money order for the amount, "at our own expense, of course".

**Disrupted System:** Officials at the Reserve Bank of India are equally unwilling to accept responsibility. "Our supply of coins to the market has actually increased," said RBI Public Relations Officer B. Rangaswamy. "Compared to a net daily outflow of coins worth Rs 20,000 up to mid-'81, we now have a net daily outflow of Rs 30,000—so we are now giving out more coins than ever before. Yet we find that we cannot keep up with the demand which means that some unscrupulous elements are hoarding coins."

There have certainly been disruptions in coin supply last year, giving hoarders a heaven-sent opportunity to cash in. First, the Hyderabad mint—one of three which supplies the nation's need—was shut down early in 1982 because the state Government found that its metal waste was seriously polluting the river and creating health hazards. Later the same year, a significant portion of the Bombay mint's capacity was diverted to the production of medals for the Asiad. At month's end, as the situation worsened, RBI officials had to grudgingly concede that there was indeed substance to the charges of scarcity. As a result a high-powered committee—which is still to have its first meeting—has been set up to find out why coins have done the disappearing trick on the Bombay market.

—CHANDER UDAY SINGH

**ANDHRA PRADESH****Civil Strife**

A MESSY controversy threatens the dignity of the highest office of the Andhra Pradesh civil services. Last fortnight, two petitions were admitted in the high court, challenging the validity of B.N. Raman's appointment as the state's chief secretary. The two writs admitted by Judge K. Amareswari question Raman's appointment last November on the grounds that a man who a decade earlier had been found lacking in integrity and devotion to duty by the President of India could not be an appropriate head of the state civil services.

Petitioners Chekuri Kasaiah, general secretary of the Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee(I), Pinnamaneni Venkateswara Rao, an officer at the Singareni Collieries, and Garipati Ram Prasad, a businessman, point out that Raman's record has not been unimpeachable. After prolonged investigation, the Union Home Ministry found

Raman guilty of "lack of integrity" while he was additional director-general of tourism.

**Charges:** He was charged with accepting lavish hospitality at the Ritz Continental Hotel in Calcutta, with which he had official dealings, and not paying his expenses, which amounted to Rs 2,489.42 during his stay there between August 8 and 10. Another charge was that he had acquired train and plane tickets for his friends Lila Swaroop and her son from the National Travel Agency (India) Pvt Ltd for a return trip to Bhubaneswar, and had not paid for them till investigations had begun, nearly two years later. A third charge related to money owed to the South Eastern Railway Hotel, Puri, where he stayed with his friends on August 11 and 12.

Raman was penalised on a presidential order that cut his pay from Rs 3,000 to Rs 2,500, and in addition, his increments were stopped for a period of four years. The scandal became public (INDIA TODAY, July 16-31, 1981), and this might normally have deprived Raman of the chance to succeed S.R. Ramamurthi as chief secretary, but for a combination of circumstances. When Ramamurthi went on leave last July, the then chief minister asked Raman to take charge. But before Ramamurthi returned, the chief ministership had changed hands too, and Vijayabhaskara Reddy asked Ramamurthi to resume charge by November 2. However, Ramamurthi was subsequently instructed to

extend his leave and was later made chairman of the Godavari Valley Development Authority, while Raman was confirmed in his place.

Opposing the admission of the writs, Raman's lawyer argued they were "politically motivated", and intended to "blackmail" Raman. Though he gave no further details, the current legal scrap is believed to be the outcome of group rivalries that have been allowed to grow since the days of chief minister Channa Reddy who appointed Ramamurthi chief secretary over the heads of three of his seniors, including E.V. Ram Reddy, who is now ombudsman of the Telugu Desam Government. Channa Reddy had ruffled feathers by ignoring his ministers and communicating directly with bureaucrats. This led to many of them going away to the Centre—and at least one, S.R. Sankaran, left after a fierce confrontation with the chief minister at a meeting.

**Bureaucratic Forces:** Ironically, Ramamurthi and Raman became recognised as the leaders of what one officer described as "two

schools of thought". Later, some Harijan officers emerged as a third force. Indicating the kind of undercurrents at play in the civil services in the state, IAS officer K. Muralidhar Rao, who was suspended some months ago said at a press conference: "There are cliques

in the IAS today out to finish some people. I feel such a clique has worked against me because I crossed swords with them. I am the senior-most backward classes officer in the state, and by punishing me they want to devalue the report on the welfare of backward classes that presented to the Government."

Meanwhile, as the amplifying bureaucratic bickering seems to threaten the implementation of his party's policies, Rama Rao has begun his search for a new chief secretary, whatever the court's verdict.

The saffron-clad chief minister is all set to usher in a Telugu Desam administration right from the top—and this time, scruples about seniority and precedence may not deter him from his purpose.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

## TAMIL NADU

# Damp Squib

THE AMBITIOUS Krishna waters project is running into hurdles before it has even begun. Barely one month after Mrs Gandhi and the chief ministers of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu gathered at a lavish function to put the final stamp of approval on the project, doubts are being raised about whether the canal would be a health hazard for the people living in the region through which it will pass. Last fortnight the Vector Control Research Centre (VCRC) announced that it was planning to study the possible ill effects of the canal.

The mere suggestion that the canal might pose a health hazard has come as a damper to the leaders of the Telugu Desam and the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK). And if the leaders of the two parties were under any impression that the VCRC had put forward nothing more than a mere proposal it was quickly dispelled when it was announced that the project would cost Rs 20 lakh. Directives from the Indian Council

for Medical Research (ICMR) exhorting the VCRC to gear itself for the study also give some indication that the project is being given high priority.

In Tamil Nadu the latest moves are generally viewed as a political ploy by the Centre. After all experts point out that it is a well documented fact that irrigation canals like the Krishna Canal have increased the incidence of malaria and filaria. The first director of the National Malaria Eradication Programme (NMEP) the late Dr B. Ananthaswami Rao claimed that in 1932 lakhs of people living in 300 Karnataka villages were hit by mosquito-borne diseases after the Mandya irrigation project was completed. Senior VCRC officials say that similar increases have been noted after the commissioning of the Mettur Dam in Tamil Nadu in 1934 and the Lower Bhavani Dam in 1940.

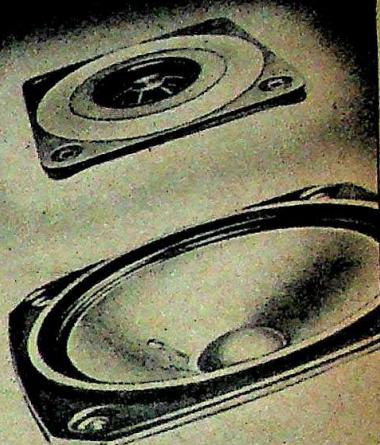
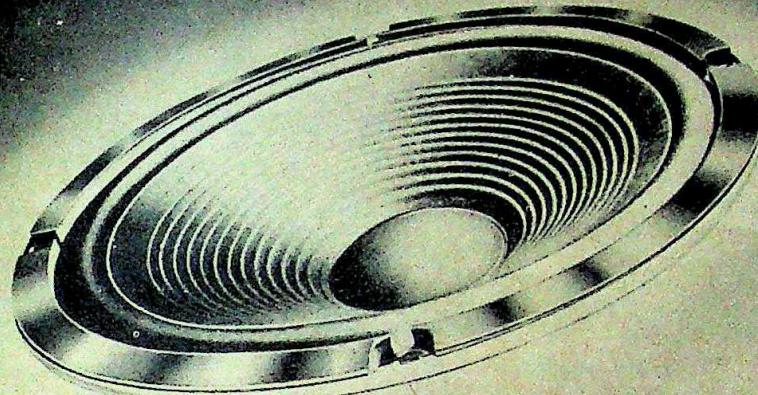
**Anticipatory Programme:** Despite this, nobody has ever yet suggested that canals should not be built because they pose a health hazard. VCRC officials defensively maintain that the proposal is intended only as an anticipatory programme to ensure that preventive measures are adopted when the canal is built.

But even if there were no doubts about the health hazards the scheme still faces innumerable other problems. Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao has openly admitted that the states cannot afford the project and appealed for "substantial financial aid." Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran has echoed this plea to the Centre. Mrs Gandhi's only response to their plea so far has been the snide remark made in Madras that "these states keep criticising us all the while, and now they ask us for help. Anyway when their formal request comes to us we will see". She did, however, praise the two chief ministers for having reached an agreement.

If it is ever finished there is no doubt that the project will have a tremendous effect both in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. Most important, the canal will transport 15 billion cubic feet of water to Madras city. Besides that it will also provide 40 billion cubic feet of water for irrigation in Cuddapah and Kurnool districts of Andhra Pradesh. But it is going to be a long time before the benefits of the project begin to flow.

—S.H. VENKATRAMANI

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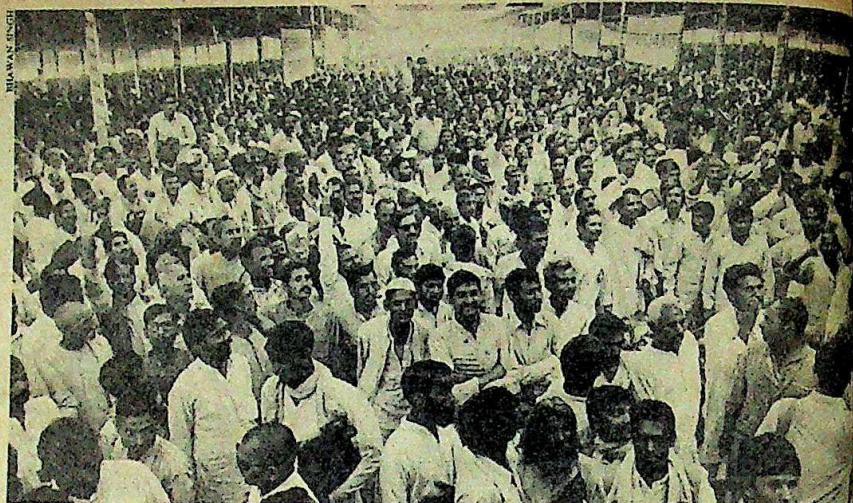
# Electoral Fallout

THE INSPECTION bungalow at Amethi, Uttar Pradesh, was host to a fevered conclave last fortnight. Huddled in a room were Sanjay Singh, state minister for forests and animal husbandry and MLA from Amethi, R.K. Tripathi, vice-president of the Sultanpur District Congress Committee(I), prominent local Congress(I) leader Jamuna Prashad Shukla and sundry other party office-bearers. Even as armed police screened visitors outside, the group debated the best way to convert defeat into victory. More specifically, they were working out ways in which to win over the independents and rebel Congress(I) candidates who had defeated party nominees in key towns and villages in the block pramukh elections held in Uttar Pradesh at the end of May.

For the Congress(I), the elections turned out to be a qualified success. Block pramukhs are elected for five years by an electoral college comprising village pradhans in each block. The over 75,000 pradhans elected at the polls in June 1982 elected 896 block pramukhs on May 29, 1983. Although the Congress(I) won over 60 per cent of the seats, it lost in places that mattered: in Amethi parliamentary constituency in Sultanpur district, represented by Rajiv Gandhi, it won only nine of the 16 seats; in fact, it lost 10 of Sultanpur district's 22 seats to independents, rebel candidates or the Opposition. And the high-level conclave tried to find out why.

**Serious Defeats:** In Amethi block itself, Jamuna Prashad Mishra of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) inflicted a humiliating four-vote defeat on the Congress(I)'s Ram Het Mishra. The party also lost in three of the four blocks of the Amethi assembly seat: in Sangampur block, Randhir Bahadur Singh, an affluent Thakur supported by Maneka Gandhi's Rashtriya Sanjay Manch (RSM), defeated the Congress(I)'s Gayatri Prashad Shukla by a crushing 28 votes. In Bhetua block of Amethi assembly constituency, Ram Hasan Singh, a primary school teacher supported by a Congress(I) faction, defeated the official Congress(I) candidate Gaya Bhakt Singh by 24 votes.

Before the elections, Chief Minister



Meeting of the village pradhans: voicing dissent

Sripat Mishra had categorically declared that a minister's berth in the Cabinet, or the inclusion of new faces, would depend on their success in getting party candidates elected. Ironically, Congress(I) candidates also lost in Mishra's own Isoli assembly constituency, also in Sultanpur district.

Ministers, in fact, were mauled in the polls. The ruling party lost to rebel candidates all the seats in the Dehra Dun district, home base for state Finance Minister Brahman Dutt. The Congress(I) also yielded Jaswantnagar to the Opposition, even though Balram Singh Yadav, state rural development and panchayati raj minister hails from here. In fact, the only minister who came out unscathed from the polls was Ranjit Singh Judeo, minister of state for public works, who ensured 100 per cent success for his party in Lalitpur and Jhansi districts.

ning by over 2,34,000 votes, over 84 per cent of those cast. Now, as Rajinder Singh, leader of the Opposition in the Assembly puts it, it is ironic that Rajiv Gandhi will have to participate in the Amethi block development committee presided over by a BJP leader.

That the Congress(I) thought Amethi poll important is evident from the fact that Sanjay Singh camped for two weeks in the area. The village pradhans were promised extra water and power, jobs for their relatives in the administration, and also loans would be written off. One day before the elections 40-odd pradhans were feted at the inspection bungalow. Opposition leaders say that the Congress(I) spent more than 1.5 lakh on the campaign. Says winning candidate Mishra: "There was complete tem-

poorly managed project. Beside, the Central government has granted large amounts of money over the years. It has cut little towards areas where villages are poorly managed. As the project is poorly managed, they have not voted for me have risked their life and people, they property." On polling day, Sanjay Singh even dropped anchor in the inspection bungalow. Complain vegetable sellers—position leaders said they would not allow voting to continue until he went out of the room.

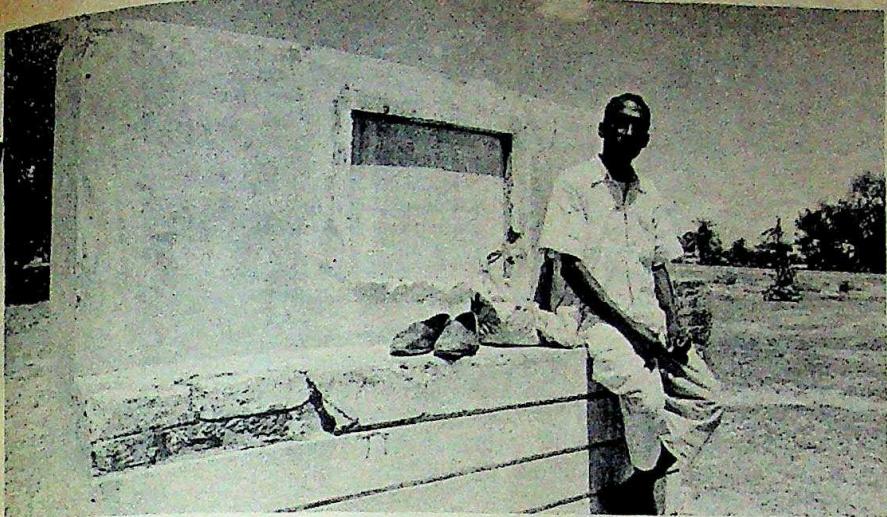
**Central Largesse:** The Amethi outcome was due more to the people's disenchantment with local leaders rather than with Rajiv Gandhi, who did not participate in choosing the candidates and not campaign. However, he

address a meeting of 30,000 village pradhans in Lucknow a month before the election. The Central Government has been liberal with projects for Amethi, among them a Rs 10-crore Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd project and a Rs 50-crore Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd electronic systems factory which employ over 3,000 people. A Rs 10-crore 500-bed hospital of the Sanjay Mem-



(From left) Dutt, Mishra and Sanjay Singh: severe blow

**Shocking Loss:** The Amethi result has shocked party leaders. Admits a senior minister: "There must be something wrong with the organisation there." An analysis of the voting shows that the Congress(I) candidates polled over 100 votes less than their opponents in the area covered by the Amethi parliamentary constituency. In June 1981, Rajiv Gandhi had swept the polls here, win-



The foundation stone of the Amethi industrial estate: generosity didn't pay

er 84 per cent is also coming up in Amethi. Singh, leader In neighbouring Sultanpur district, the Centre has sanctioned a Rs 500-crore fertiliser project and the Oil and Natural Gas Development Commission is processing a pipeline project which will connect Sultanpur with Bombay. High and provide gas for the fertiliser project. Besides, the Union Industry Ministry has granted letters of intent for over a dozen units worth over Rs 1,000 crore. But this largesse also cuts little ice in one of the state's most backward areas where over 70 per cent of the villages are without regular water supply, the power supply is erratic and the roads are poorly maintained.

As Thakurs dominate the constituency, they have been able to corner the Government's attention. In one incident, for example, they persuaded officials to install hand-

anchors in Harjan bastis in Amethi and Naraini villages. Complains Het Ram, an Amethi vegetable vendor: "Ours is a story of utter neglect and exploitation. When we all voted for Rajivji, we were expecting to be looked after but the local leaders have become more arrogant. Their primary concern is the maintenance of inspection bungalows and nothing else."

Sanjay Singh, however, denies that the constituency is not being properly looked after. Says he: "During the last three years, lots of facilities have been added here. Under the 20-point programme Amethi has received a lot of attention." He says that his party has won 15 of 16 pramukh seats—as the polls are ostensibly fought on a non-party basis, he is obviously staking a claim to everybody who won, except the BJP victor. Said Tripathi:

tions are aimed at tarnishing the image of Sanjay Singh. Amethi is a Congress(I) stronghold. The people can never forget the past services of the party and also the contributions of Raja Rananjaya Singh and his adopted son Sanjay Singh towards their uplift and progress." However, the defeated Congress(I) candidate Shukla asserts: "It is not my defeat. It is the defeat of the leaders and they know the causes of this humiliation."

**Ominous Trend:** Another fall-out of the elections is the victory of a number of candidates involved in criminal cases. Among them are:

► Krishna Kinker Singh, a Congress(I)-supported candidate who won in Basti district. His name appears in an FIR registered last year in a murder case in the district;

► Ram Gopal Mishra, a Congress(I) can-



(From left) J.P. Mishra, Randhir Singh and Ranjit Singh: victors

didate who won in Sitapur district. Warrants for him under the National Security Act (NSA) are pending with the Lucknow district magistrate;

► Raj Bahadur Singh, the main accused in the Varanasi Vishwanath Temple theft case, won as a Congress(I)-supported candidate in Varanasi district;

► Nanda Yadav of the Lok Dal won from

the Jahanaganj block in Azamgarh district; Yadav is in jail in connection with a murder case;

► Hukum Singh, Congress(I), who won from Ram Nagar block in Barabanki district, was arrested in connection with the unnatural death of a political worker last year. The investigation is continuing.

Gang leaders appear to have helped quite a few candidates win. Hari Shankar Tiwari, a dreaded gang chief of eastern Uttar Pradesh, who was detained under the NSA in 1981, managed the victory of over a dozen pramukhs in that part of the state. In fact, his protégés received the support of all political parties. Admits a senior state government official: "The panchayati raj system has its disadvantages too. But Gandhiji didn't foresee that these institutions would be used by criminals to gain credibility for themselves."

**Coming Test:** The next electoral trial of strength is slated for July 10, when the block pramukhs and the pradhans will elect representatives to the zilla parishad—one representative per block—the body which oversees the development activities for a district. The representative and the block pramukhs will in their turn elect the parishad chairman. The state Government has finalised an ordinance which allows it to nominate 19 members with full voting rights to zilla parishads, but ruling party members and ministers are fanning out determinedly to ensure the support of the elected members.

Quite apart from the political laurels, getting control of a zilla parishad or a block development committee means controlling an annual budget which varies between Rs 10 lakh and Rs 1 crore. The Congress(I) cannot afford to let such control pass into the hands of the Opposition, which is equally

determined to dent the ruling party's successes as much as possible. Says Mohan Singh, Lok Dal chief whip in the Assembly: "The Congress(I) Government wants to control the zilla parishads not through elections but through nominated people. Even in the block pramukh elections, they directed the state government officials to vote for the Congress(I) candidates. We will not allow the state Government to subvert democratic institutions."

The Congress(I), however, is looking ahead to the general elections as well. These are now only 17 months away and the party is going to work hard to garner the support of the 75,000 village pradhans who play a crucial role in the way villagers vote. Meanwhile, the party organisation is racking its brains for ways to seal the serious breaches made in its citadels.

—PRABHU CHAWLA in Amethi

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RASHTRIYA SANJAY MANCH

# Rifts In The Ranks

**H**ARDLY three months after it was formed, Maneka Gandhi's political party the Rashtriya Sanjay Manch (RSM) is already heading towards a down-the-ranks split in its home state, Uttar Pradesh. Last fortnight—after over 2,000 members resigned—the simmering dissent in the party burst into open public hostility. Street-corner politics by members, described as "anti-social elements" by Manch members, is ruining the party organisation—and any credibility it may have.

Maneka flew to Lucknow in a frantic bid to paper over the rift before it widened too far. After a two-day closed-door meet with her party workers and the executive, she announced, on June 26, that the state party organisation would be revamped. For "administrative reasons", the state has been split into two zones, with Chandan Vijay Singh as vice-president of the western sector based at Moradabad, and party vice-president Akbar Ahmad holding temporary additional charge of the eastern sector at Lucknow. Suresh Dutt Paliwal, who has been relieved as president of the state unit, has been made a general secretary at the Centre.

**Charges:** Paliwal, however, continues to be dogged by allegations of high-handedness and favouritism levelled by Lal Shivendra Bux Singh, one of RSM's state level joint secretaries. Hari Ram Tripathi, treasurer of the Manch, resigned minutes before he was to have been expelled for indiscipline. And later, Lal Bahadur Saxena, Manch convenor in Pilibhit, resigned with 2,000 other active members. Said Saxena: "A change in Mrs Maneka Gandhi's attitude and the failure of the Manch executive to weed out anti-social elements from her party were among the main reasons for this mass resignation." He further claimed that most of those who had taken a moralistic stand and resigned earlier were lured back either with promises of high posts or simply with money.

These resignations, *en masse*, only made a mockery of Maneka's emphatic statement earlier that there was no dissent in the party. She had said: "Uttar Pradesh is now in order, more or less. And now we can pick and choose our workers, we are trying our best to eliminate infiltrators." Earlier, she had insisted that the major cause for resentment in the party was that many people were

there only for personal gain and not for any serious political commitment.

The trouble really began with a memorandum that Mohammed Usman—along with four other Manch members, Vidya Mishra, Prakash Pant, Hari Ram Tripathi and Ravi Saxena—sent to Akbar "Dumpy"



Clockwise (from top left) Maneka, Shivendra Bux Singh, Saxena and Usman: dissent

Ahmad. In the signed memorandum, they highlighted their serious concern over the anti-social elements that, they claim, cling to the RSM at all levels, including its hastily formed executive.

**Controversial Move:** Infuriated, Akbar Ahmad ordered Usman and his family to immediately vacate their rooms at 9, Trilok Nath Road—also the Lucknow office of the Manch—where they had been staying for years. Justifying this move against Usman, who had once been his close ally and confidant, Ahmad said: "Usman and his sympathisers were impudent to cast aspersions and level baseless allegations against their own party men and such people are best dispensed with or else they will only wreck the party."

What, however, was becoming increas-

singly obvious was that in many cases the charges were not only specific but also undeniable. Said Usman emphatically: "Ahmad is grossly mistaken if he thinks I or any of my supporters now are saboteurs in any sense. Our sincere apprehension is that though we profess to be a national political party, we have yet to establish even a regional base strong enough to weather any stiff political onslaught once an electoral battle gets under way." Backing him, Jagat Narain Saxena, a former Congressman and now one of the seniormost Manch members, said: "There is little doubt that the Manch executive lacks political insight and organisational ability."

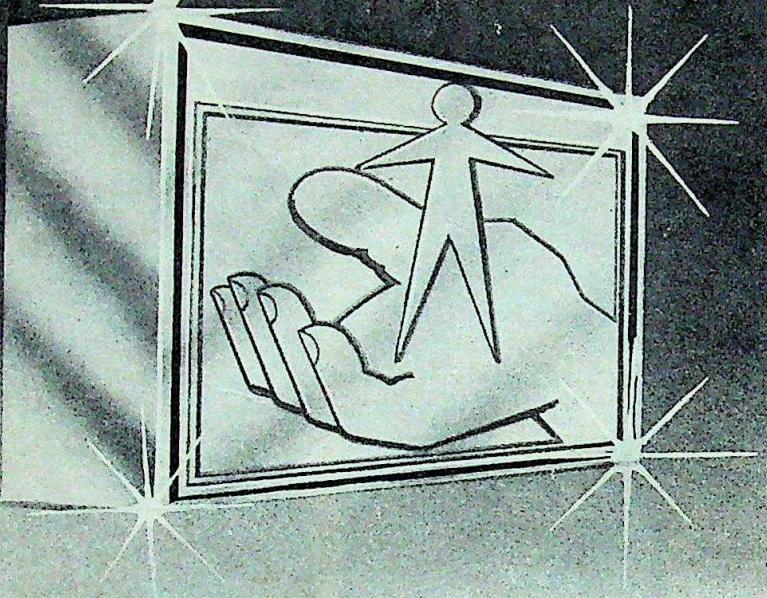
The rift in the RSM began barely a month after its lavish inaugural convention on April 3 when Ahmad, tipped to be general secretary of the party, was replaced at the last moment by J.N. Mishra. Instead, he was made vice-president, a post with much less administrative power. Ahmad, however, continued to exert considerable influence in his home state through his cronies—among whom he disburses lavish funds.

**Increasing Schism:** Widespread resentment against this strain of politics was manifest at last month's state level executive, which was boycotted by 19 of the 26 office-bearers. Only 12 of 54 districts were represented. Said a disillusioned Lal Shivendra Bux Singh: "Unless we put the brakes now and ask some people to get off, the party wagon is bound to skid and smash up. Our credibility already is at an all-time low and no one seems to know who is in the driver's seat."

Meanwhile, the chorus of dissent continues to grow. Said Dharmendra Shankhyadhar, former Uttar Pradesh state level convenor who resigned from the party last year: "What the RSM has consistently failed to realise is that their loss is Congress (I)'s gain. And in the bargain we are also losing out on mass support." Shankhyadhar disputed Ahmad's claim that RSM has a membership of nearly 5 lakh. He said of the nearly 1 lakh forms printed, not more than 25,000 were duly filled and returned to the Manch office. Moreover, daily mail received in the Manch's Lucknow office had dropped dramatically. Earlier more than a hundred letters were sorted daily, but now more letters are being dispatched than are being received.

That the party image has become tarnished is only too obvious, even to the all-India RSM General Secretary Sudhir Mishra. In a press note released in Lucknow, he admitted openly that the Manch was losing its public

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image. Sripat Mishra, Uttar Pradesh's Congress(I) chief minister, commenting on the RSM impact value said outright: "Their political value is zero as a party which dares to bill itself as a national alternative, for they have no mass support, no base, only some curiosity value, which, too, has been diminishing rapidly." And as another state level Congress(I) leader put it: "The Manch has some big guns on their side but they are facing the wrong way and anyway no one apparently knows how to fire them—obviously no one is going to teach them how." What is happening, though, is that while the estranged leaders maintain a stony silence towards each other, political gossip in the Lucknow coffee houses continues to grow spicier.

—ANAND SAGAR

HARYANA

## Bhajan's Burden

THE LATEST round in the trial of strength in the Haryana Cabinet has begun. Chief Minister Bhajan Lal made the first move last fortnight when he sacked Public Health Minister Lachhman Singh and Revenue Minister Phool Chand. By the next day the dissidents had struck back and six ministers—Public Works Minister Harpal Singh, Agriculture Minister Surinder Singh, Social Welfare Minister Govardan Das Chauhan, Development and Panchayat Minister Sharda Rani, Local



Bhajan Lal: pre-emptive strike

Self-government Minister A.C. Choudhary and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Amar Singh Dhanak—handed in their resignations directly to Mrs Gandhi.

The dissident ministers have been making the rounds in New Delhi, asking both Mrs Gandhi and Rajiv to intercede and "salvage the state from Lal as his misdeeds are ruining the party". In recent weeks the ranks of the dissidents have swelled alarmingly—for Bhajan Lal. "It was we who, leaving aside Lok Dal leader Devi Lal's offer, had sided with Mrs Gandhi and brought Lal to power," says Singh, who was the main architect of Lal's government. The dissidents hope that Lal's rivalry with Union Agriculture Minister Rao Birendra Singh will work to their advantage.

The tension has been building for the past four months. Earlier Lal had seemed to be knuckling under. At the previous cabinet meeting, he revoked his March-end directive, shifting senior ministers to insignificant departments and empowering bureaucrats 'to act' in their places. As a result, when the ministers were returned to actual power, they undertook a massive administrative shake-up. Within a month, 5,000 civil servants were transferred. Alleged the civil servants' leader M.S. Dilawari: "These transfers are purely political and will wreck the administration."

**Corruption Charges:** The worst hit by this was the Forest Development Board (INDIA TODAY, April 30). Board chairman Devinder Sharma's orders transferring certain officers to lucrative ranges in Ambala district were countermanded by the then forest minister Phool Chand. Said Chand: "If Sharma is allowed to have the most corrupt officers as rangers in the lead forest areas, the state will be deprived of its forest wealth very soon. I cannot be a helpless onlooker."

The other minister dismissed on June 27 was Lachhman Singh, who earned Lal's ire during his stint as industry minister. In fact, the current crisis had been imminent since March, when Lal and Singh were at loggerheads over what has come to be known as the 'quarry scandal'. The debate hinged on whether, in auctions of stone quarries, the stone crushing machines should be included.

Singh, who was then minister for industry, rejected a departmental proposal that crushers be excluded from a quarry before auction. His argument was that "exclusion of 15 crushers from Anangpur Quarry in Faridabad will cause a heavy loss, as stone crushers and contractors are going to pool and grab it at a very nominal rate in the auc-

tion. Inclusion of the crushers will make the bid competitive, avoid pooling and fix the reserve price as Rs 50 lakh against last year's auction of Rs 18 lakh."

**Ministerial Tussle:** However, Brahmin Sarup Ojha, secretary for industry and principal secretary to the chief minister, referred the matter to the chief minister, as "the minister and the administrative secretary had differed". The issue was referred to a legal cell of the Government which also expressed the opinion that crushers should be included in the auction. Singh, however, stuck to his guns, protesting that the legal cell was not the right body to decide an issue that was essentially non-legal. The minister apprehended that, with crushers not included in the deal, contractors would pool resources to buy the quarry together. The un-



Sacked ministers Phool Chand (left) and Lachhman Singh: rising tide of dissidence

competitive bidding, he felt, would reduce the price considerably.

Finding the minister adamant, Ojha returned the matter to the chief minister's table. Predictably, Lal accepted Ojha's argument and ordered exclusion of crushers from the sale of quarries. Singh, on the other hand, lost the prestigious industry portfolio. Three of his supporters—Harpal Singh, Sharda Rani and G.D. Chauhan also lost their ministries.

The squabbles of Haryana's ministers do not end at quarries. Irrigation and Power Minister Shamsher Singh Surjewala—number two in the Cabinet—recently wrote to the prime minister that "certain anti-social elements are being encouraged by certain political quarters and these elements can cause physical harm to me and my family." When Mrs Gandhi asked Lal to take adequate measures, he first divulged the letter to the press and then offered the embarrassed minister a bodyguard. Surjewala awkwardly refused the offer.

With the ministers embroiled in intrigues against each other, the future of the ministry is open to speculation.

—GOBIND THUKRAL

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## CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

At the Annual General Meeting  
held on 24th June, 1983.



SHRI HARI SHANKAR SINGHANIA

### Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have great pleasure in welcoming you to the 44th Annual General Meeting of your Company. The year 1982 has been a very significant year in the history of your Company, as the Company completed its new diversification plan through the installation of a cement plant with an annual capacity of 5 lakh tonnes and commissioning it during the year. As you know, the Company has been following a policy of growth through diversification. Because of the timely investment plans for this major diversification, the effect of the recessionary market conditions in the Paper Industry can be largely mitigated, as the Cement Division will be making a substantial contribution to the profitability of the Company.

It is a matter of satisfaction that in spite of the recessionary conditions in the industry, the Company has been able to maintain a dividend of 20% on its enlarged equity capital of Rs.4,84,36,860 as 6,40,150 shares of Rs.10 each were allotted during the year on the conversion of 10.5% Convertible Bonds and a part of the loans of the financial institutions.

### ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

Before touching upon the performance of the various units of the Company, I would like to deal with some important aspects of the country's economy.

Although the immediate economic scene is not promising, the long-term outlook is very good. The capital market has continued to be encouraging. Capital issues during 1982 amounted to about Rs. 774 crores against Rs. 526 crores last year. The market for non-convertible bonds is also improving. However, the country is still beset with several problems. The drought during the last year has resulted in lower agricultural production. Food grain production during the year is feared to be lower by 4% than last year. Even after planning for decades, we are still so dependent on the monsoons that one year of drought can upset the whole economy. It is, therefore, essential to increase the irrigation facilities and efforts on research and development to find out ways and means for the reduction of our dependence on weather conditions for agricultural production.

Even in the industrial field, the growth has not kept pace with expectations and has ranged around 4% during 1982-83. India's trade balance shows a steep rise in the trade gap. The only answer to our ills lies in increased production and higher productivity. Higher production, however, cannot be achieved without infrastructural facilities. The unsatisfactory state of these facilities—particularly power, coal and rail transportation—has been the major factor in inhibiting industrial performance.

While appreciating the need for accelerated depreciation allowance for capital intensive industries, the Central Government has raised

## HIGHLIGHTS

- CEMENT PLANT IN RAJASTHAN COMMISSIONED ON 15TH AUGUST, 1982—MUCH AHEAD OF SCHEDULE.
- STEPS ARE UNDER WAY TO DOUBLE THE CAPACITY OF THE CEMENT PLANT.
- DIVIDEND MAINTAINED AT 20% IN SPITE OF RECESSIONARY CONDITIONS IN THE INDUSTRY.
- INCREASE IN THE INCIDENCE OF EXCISE DUTY ON PAPER AND BOARD BY 30% TO 50%—A DAMPER ON THE PAPER INDUSTRY WHICH IS ALREADY GOING THROUGH ACUTE RECESSIONARY CONDITIONS.
- THE INCREASE IN THE PRICE OF WHITE PRINTING PAPER BY THE GOVERNMENT TO RS. 5,400 PER TONNE IS STILL CONSIDERABLY SHORT OF THE ACTUAL COST OF PRODUCTION. THE PRICE SHOULD BE RAISED AT LEAST TO MATCH THE MANUFACTURING COST.
- LARGE SCALE PLANTATIONS FOR RAW MATERIAL SUPPLY IS ESSENTIAL FOR THE GROWTH OF THE PAPER INDUSTRY. A NATIONAL POLICY ON INVESTMENT IN THE PAPER INDUSTRY WITH EMPHASIS ON RAW MATERIAL SUPPLY SHOULD BE EVOLVED AT THE EARLIEST AND IMPLEMENTED VIGOROUSLY.
- INCREASED PRODUCTION AND HIGHER PRODUCTIVITY IS THE ONLY ANSWER TO THE ILLS OF THE ECONOMY. TO ACHIEVE THIS, THE UNSATISFACTORY STATE OF INFRASTRUCTURAL FACILITIES LIKE POWER, COAL AND RAIL TRANSPORTATION SHOULD BE REMEDIED.
- INDIAN ENTREPRENEURS' SHAREHOLDING IS FORCED TO BE DILUTED FOR THE SAKE OF THE COMPANY'S GROWTH AND INCREASED PRODUCTION CAPACITY BECAUSE OF LOAN CONVERTIBILITY AND EROSION OF SAVINGS DUE TO HIGH TAXATION ETC.
- LOAN CONVERTIBILITY BY FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS SHOULD BE SCRAPPED ALTOGETHER. IT HAS DONE MORE HARM THAN GOOD FOR INDUSTRIAL GROWTH.
- AN ERA OF PROSPERITY AND PLENTY FOR THE VAST MASSES OF OUR COUNTRY CAN ONLY BE BROUGHT ABOUT BY ABOLISHING ALL OBSTACLES IN THE PATH OF DEVELOPMENT AND GENUINELY REWARDING SUCCESSFUL EFFORT.

the depreciation from 10% to 15%, there are certain retrograde steps such as the levy of income tax on a minimum of 30% of the profits after depreciation but without taking into consideration investment and other allowances. There is also a provision in the Finance Act, 1983, for disallowance on 20% of all expenses on advertising, publicity and sales promotion. These measures will seriously affect companies who had planned their growth on the basis of expected income tax reliefs which will now not be available to them, seriously jeopardising their cash flows.

In the Year of Productivity, 1982, the man-days lost were the highest. It is necessary to create the psychology of goodwill and productivity. Labour problems should be solved across the table rather than through a militant attitude, violence and illegal strikes. The Government should also not hesitate to take stern action whenever it is necessary for improving labour relations.

### Promoters' Holdings & Related Issues

Currently, there is a very live controversy about the relatively thin equity holding of some groups in effective management of leading companies. It is worthwhile to evaluate the reasons which have led to this situation.

Till the 1950s, the equity market was relatively dormant and entrepreneurs were investing anything upto 50 per cent or more of the equity capital of the public companies. The scenario started changing from the mid-1950s and has since altered beyond recognition. A formidable array of laws, regulations and controls over the operations of the private corporate sector was created and constantly expanded, leading to a substantial abridgement of its rights and freedom of action. India became one of the most heavily taxed nations in the world with tax rates on individuals at levels which made any large personal investments in corporations impossible. Besides, the Government assumed total charge of a investable and lendable funds by taking over the

ownership of banks and insurance companies. The process has been compounded by the mandatory insertion of the 20% convertibility clause on all rupee term loans over Rs. 2 crores. Further, under the guide lines laid down under the MRTP Act and by the Controller of Capital Issues, the large industrial groups have not been allowed to hold more than 40% of the equity capital of existing or new companies.

As a result of the juxtaposition of all these factors, the equity holding of the promoters as individuals, but more substantially through other companies managed by them, has tended to go down with every stage of expansion and diversification. The process has been particularly accentuated by the growing size of capital investments. The promoters did accept the dilution of their capital base in the larger interests of the undertaking concerned.

I would like here to comment on the mandatory convertibility clause applied by the financial institutions. I believe that the spirit of the 40% ceiling on equity ownership by the institutions, announced by the Finance Minister as far back as June, 1980, is not always observed in practice. It is a common feature now for the financial institutions to insert the convertibility clause even in case of companies where they already hold 40% of their holdings plus their conversion rights amount to more than 40%. In effect, the institutions sell off a part of their holdings at a substantial profit to reduce it below 40% and exercise their conversion option thereafter at a price which is substantially lower, often one-half to one-third the market price at the time of conversion. This has further accelerated the dilution process. Further, often, a sizeable portion of the promoters' contribution has to be brought in as unsecured loans because of the restriction that the promoters cannot hold more than 40% of the equity capital of the Company. These unsecured loans are, in fact, "equity" in the real sense, as they are repayable only after the repayment of all loans from the financial institutions. Thus, in fact, the promoters (as the entrepreneur groups have come to be called in India) are forced to

reduce their shareholdings first to 40% and then by constant dilution due to the increase in capital of the company by convertibility options of the financial institutions.

Thus, one sees over the years, a forced dilution of shareholding of the entrepreneur groups even when they are contributing substantially towards corporate growth. With the growth and expansion of the company, this percentage keeps on going down. Growth is a must, because without it, business stagnates and becomes sick. Any impediments on growth, even psychological, must therefore be removed.

Recent events in India have only highlighted that there is merit in management groups retaining a reasonable minimum shareholding in order to ensure stability in management. It is in this light that the convertibility provisions of the financial institutions should be viewed. In my view, the time has come that this provision should be scrapped altogether. It has done more harm than good. Moreover, the matter should be viewed in the perspective of future challenges before us.

The changing scenario of international economics offers a great opportunity to India to emerge as a strong industrial nation. We have great many strengths which overshadow our weaknesses and which, if utilised properly in the next decade or two, can put our country among the leading nations of the world. It is in this perspective, that I venture to suggest that we should look at our policies and action programmes, in order to ensure that we seize this opportunity.

This brings me to the issue of the role of an entrepreneur. This role is essentially one of bringing a corporation into existence, perceive market opportunities, procure finance to meet the opportunities and ensure the effective utilisation of resources entrusted in his charge. In the ultimate analysis, what is of key importance is performance, and not only the percentage holding by an entrepreneur/promoter in any given enterprise.

The catalytic role played by the large houses in conceiving, launching and implementing large projects, has not been adequately recognised. In case of a new project, grit, determination and resourcefulness of the promoters to see it through all the initial vicissitudes are vital ingredients for its success. In the absence of back-up from promoters with a proven track record, many of these projects would not have received the requisite support from the investing public and the financial institutions. The critical element here is the initiation of the project and the managerial, financial and technical skills brought into play for successful implementation, even more so than the amount of capital contributed.

If responsive private enterprise was accepted as a positive force and an instrument for rapid industrialisation of the country and for the improvement of the living standards of the masses, our national objectives could certainly be achieved faster. There is undue sensitivity on the growing size of the so-called industrial houses. I often wonder as to whether those who voice their concern are at all aware of what is happening in the wide world outside. On reading a recent issue of the Fortune magazine, I find that the average total assets of the 500 largest US corporations in 1982 was Rs.2,600 crores. This is well above the total assets of all the companies under the control and management of India's two largest industrial houses. In fact, the aggregate assets of the two largest groups are lower than the assets of most of the first 200 companies listed in this study.

The crying need of the hour is to substantially widen our consumption base which would imply an improvement in the purchasing power. On the other hand, positive encouragement and inducement to initiative and enterprise, abolishing all obstacles which come in the path of development and genuinely rewarding successful effort, are essentially required. This alone can bring about the ushering in of an era of prosperity and plenty for the vast masses of our country. Looking to our immense capabilities, this is well within our reach if only we grab the opportunities promptly

with both hands and leave the task to be accomplished to those best suited.

#### PAPER & BOARD DIVISION

From the Directors' Report, you would have seen that production in the Paper and Board Division was satisfactory and that the JK Paper Mills has increased its installed capacity by 2,000 tonnes per annum, bringing the total capacity of your Company in the Paper and Board Division to 66,650 tonnes per annum. The Company has also an Industrial Licence for expansion by 8,000 tonnes and a Letter of Intent for further expansion to increase the capacity by 15,000 tonnes per annum. These expansions shall be taken up for implementation in due course.

As reported last year, the recessionary conditions in the Paper and Board Industry have not only continued but have also further aggravated during the year under review.

The budget for 1983-84 has changed the basis of excise duty in the case of Paper and Board from ad-valorem to specific cum ad-valorem, resulting in the increase in the incidence of excise duty by 30% to 50%. This is a damper on the Paper Industry which is already going through acute recessionary conditions.

The Government, at last, has been able to appreciate the case of the Paper Industry and has increased the price of White Printing Paper from Rs. 4,200 to Rs. 5,400 per tonne and has also lowered the obligation for the supply of White Printing Paper from 30% to 25%. These are welcome steps, although the price of Rs. 5,400 per tonne is still considerably short of the actual cost of production which has further risen on account of the hike in price of coal, railway freight, power tariff as well as due to additional excise levies introduced in the Finance Act, 1983. It is hoped that the price of White Printing Paper will be raised at least to match the manufacturing cost.

The paper market is showing signs of stabilisation and it is expected that before the end of 1983, the recessionary trend may be reversed.

#### The Paper Industry

I would like here to point out the very important factor which is not being given due attention. The main raw material for paper production in the country is bamboo, supplemented partly by hardwoods. These are forest products. Forests are State subjects and the policy of the States so far has been a short-term revenue oriented one. For the growth of the Industry, it is very necessary that this policy should be drastically altered and replaced by a long-term one. We have yet to go a long way as the use of paper in the country even now, is a meagre 2 kg. per head. It is also very clear that if this Industry has to grow, raw material supply will have to be assured.

This can be done only by taking up large scale plantations either directly by the Industry or jointly by the Industry and the State Governments in different regions of the country. As these plantations will be for industrial raw material supply, they should be given the status of an Industry and should be treated as such. Institutional loans should be made freely available for this purpose at concessional rates of interest. Unless concerted efforts are initiated immediately, the country may face a heavy drain of foreign exchange through imports of paper—a basic consumer material.

These plantations should be such as to be able to ensure the supply of raw material to mills with 300 to 500 tonnes per day capacity, as now this is the most economic size for a viable paper unit. The capital costs are going so high that unless large plants are established, the country may have to face a paper famine in the not distant future.

It is also to be noted that increase in capacity of the Paper Industry during recent years has been mainly by the installation of small units without pulping capacity. These units, by their very nature, can only supplement the supply but cannot be depended upon as main suppliers in the context of the rising needs of the country.

Further, these units intrinsically are not viable, and as such will always have to be supported through fiscal incentives.

We have to look forward and plan our strategy for the year 2000 from now on. I would, therefore, urge very strongly that a National Policy on Investment in the Paper Industry, with emphasis on raw material supply, should be evolved at an early date and should be implemented vigorously. Such a policy should ensure the viability of the Industry.

#### BATTERY DIVISION

The dry cell industry has a very large idle capacity and is passing through severely competitive market conditions. The increase in the cost of inputs and the substantial increase in the incidence of customs and other duties have also affected the Division's operations. The production during 1982 was 70 million cells against 72.5 million in 1981, showing a slight set-back. However, the performance on the export front has been satisfactory, exports being 27 million cells against 21 million in 1981. Various steps have been initiated with a view to combat the problems encountered so far and it is hoped that positive results of these steps will be available in the near future.

#### CEMENT DIVISION

The Company's cement plant, named "LAKSHMI CEMENT" at Jaykaypuram, Dist. Sirohi, hitherto a zero-industry area of Rajasthan, was commissioned much ahead of schedule and trial runs started from 15th August, 1982. It is a matter of great satisfaction that the cement produced in this plant has been very well accepted in the market on account of its excellent quality.

The power situation in the State of Rajasthan has been very unsatisfactory and even for this priority industry, there have been power cuts upto 100% for long periods. Your Company has already installed two D.G. sets to meet 50% of the requirement of power. Two more D.G. sets will be shortly commissioned so as to raise the captive power generation capacity to 100% of the power requirement. This will help in maintaining the production even during power cuts, although at a very high cost.

The dual pricing policy with partial de-control which was introduced in February, 1982, is continuing and has helped the Cement Industry to work with more vigour. However, the price of levy cement is not yet raised to compensate for the higher cost of manufacture due to a steep rise in various input costs and Government levies such as freight charges, the price of coal, power tariff, etc. It is hoped that the Government will take due consideration of the Industry's request and raise the price of levy cement as requested by the Cement Manufacturers' Association.

It is proposed to double the capacity of the cement plant for which steps are under way.

#### NEW VENTURE

The Company, jointly with the Industrial Promotion & Investment Corporation of Orissa Limited, is setting up a plant in the State of Orissa in a Joint Sector Company, the Orissa Synthetics Limited, incorporated for the purpose, for the manufacture of 15,000 tonnes per annum of Polyester Staple Fibre for which the world-renowned Dupont technology has been arranged.

Before I conclude, I would like to express my appreciation to all the workers, staff and officers of the Company for their hard and dedicated work. My thanks are also due to the All-India Financial Institutions, Banks, Insurance Companies and the State Governments of Rajasthan, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh for their continued co-operation and assistance in our activities.

Thank you.

(NOTE : This does not purport to be a record of the proceedings of the Annual General Meeting.)



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## CURRENT EVENTS

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PONDICHERRY

### Party Hopping



THE IMPOSITION of President's Rule in Pondicherry has put a merciful end to an uneasy alliance between the Congress(I) and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK). The parting of ways came even as hectic parleys were taking place between the two parties but the break has been on the cards for a long time now. During the last few months particularly the Congress(I) has been looking increasingly uncomfortable in the company of the DMK. The party is said to have been incensed over the fact that the former DMK chief minister D. Ramachandran was one of the four participants at the meeting of non-Congress(I) southern chief ministers earlier this year.

But the ultimate snapping of ties between the two parties has significance that extends far beyond the minuscule Union Territory of Pondicherry. If there were any doubts about this they were quickly dispelled when Lok Sabha Deputy Speaker G. Lakshmanan resigned from his post soon afterwards. In neighbouring Tamil Nadu also the Congress(I) has gradually moved close enough towards the ruling All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) to be able to talk in terms of an electoral alliance at the next elections whenever they are. One pointer of the way the wind was blowing came when Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran at a meeting in Tiruchi welcomed the "new climate of understanding" between the two parties.

**Constant Friction:** The Congress(I) has good reason to be disenchanted with the DMK. The alliance has brought it no great dividends. And tension has been on the rise for the last two years ever since the DMK refrained from campaigning for the Congress(I) during the Tirupattur by-election to the Tamil Nadu Assembly. Again when the by-elections to the Tiruchendur and Peria-kulam Lok Sabha seats came up both parties fielded separate candidates. In Pondicherry the relationship has been particularly strained.

Congress(I) ministers of the outgoing ministry also allege that Pondicherry chief minister D. Ramachandran was constantly interfering with their work. Referring to the constant friction Tindivanam K. Ramamoorthy, a Tamil Nadu MLC, says: "Even

when the coalition Government was formed in Pondicherry in 1980 the Congress(I) chose its nominees and the DMK did likewise. There weren't any joint discussions between the parties and that has been evident all along."

These differences were sharpened at the beginning of the year when M. Shanmugam, a former leader of the DMK Legislative Party crossed the floor and joined the AIADMK, citing the corruption of the DMK Government as the reason for his changing sides. In the end Shanmugam found that he was the only person who left the party but it was clear from his pronouncements at the time that he had expected others to follow him. Rumour had it then that his defection was supposed to have paved the way for an eventual tie-up between the Congress(I) and the AIADMK. Shanmugam also apparently hoped for support from some Janata MLAs. But while this grand coalition was being worked out the Congress(I)



Chandy (left) and Ramachandran: strident claims and counter claims



suddenly said to have had second thoughts about an alliance with the AIADMK in Pondicherry, and backed out.

But once the ball was set rolling it could not be stopped so easily. The next crisis came after a lapse of a few months when DMK legislator Ramalingam was expelled for levelling charges against ministers of his own party in a representation to Lt-Governor K.M. Chandy. Ramalingam joined the AIADMK on June 22 increasing the strength of the party to two in the 30-member Assembly. Before anything came of this move the Congress(I) pulled out of the Government and precipitated the downfall of the ministry.

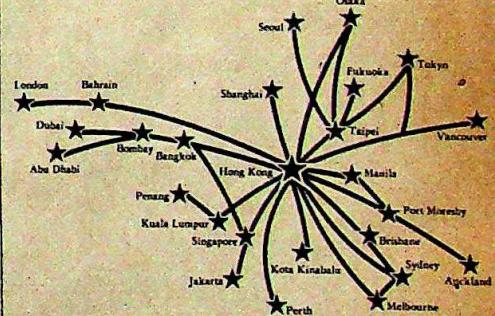
**Charges Traded:** As always nowadays the claims and counter-claims began the moment the Congress(I) quit the coalition. Chief Minister D. Ramachandran claimed he could continue in office as he could count on the support of the Janata Party, the one member each of the CPI(M) and the Indira

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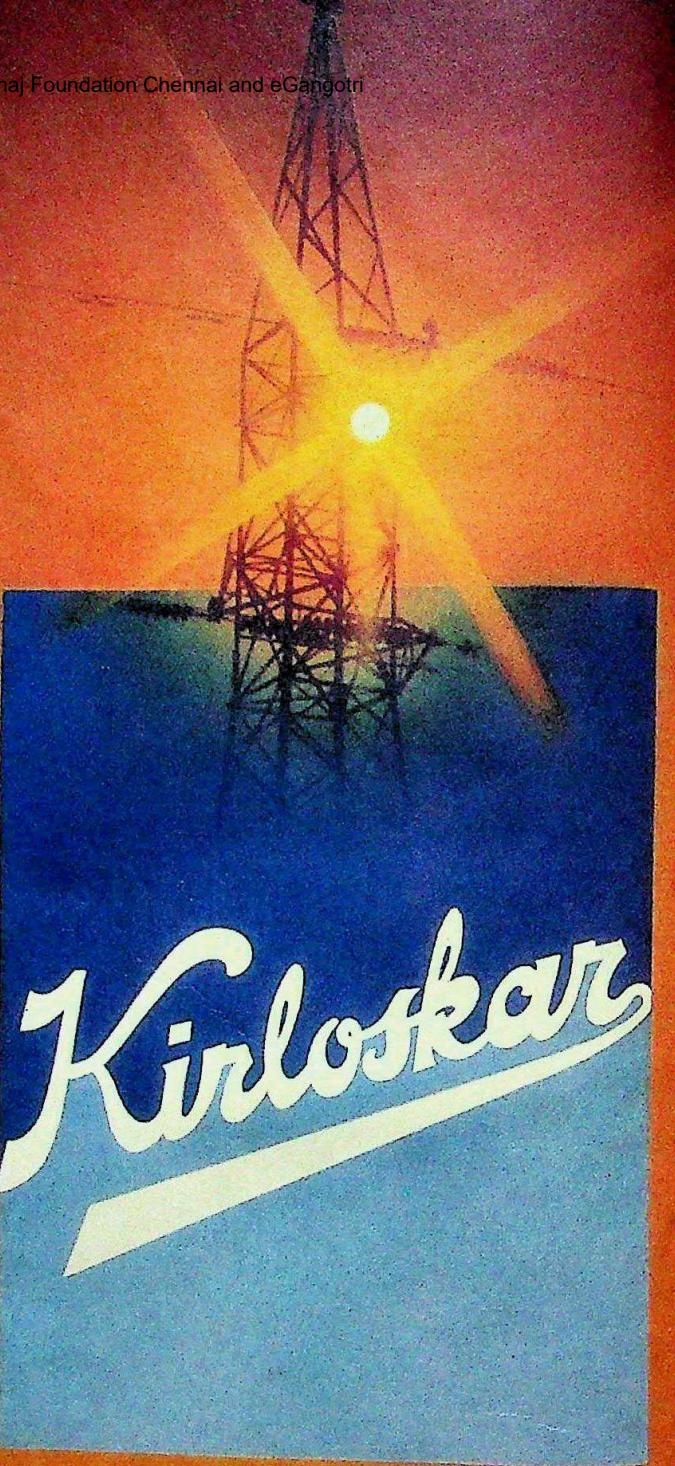
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Union Muslim League (IUML). There were doubts, however, about whether he could really be certain about the support of all three Janata members since one MLA Subbaraya Gounder had earlier sent in a memorandum to the Lt-Governor alleging that the ministry was corrupt. Defending the Lt-Governor's stand, Congress(I) MP P. hanmugam said: "The support of some MK MLA's was doubtful."

In the event D. Ramachandran never got a chance to prove his majority. Within two days of the Congress(I) resigning the Lt-Governor dissolved the ministry and imposed President's Rule on the Union Territory. His action was immediately the subject of controversy. DMK members angrily alleged that Chandy, who was formerly president of the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee(I) before he became Lt-Governor had acted artisanally by dissolving the Assembly and of giving the DMK a chance to muster a majority. To this charge Chandy retorts loftily: "There is no scope in democracy for giving a party time to increase its strength. It would have been tantamount to encouraging horse-trading."

Chandy's protests do not obviously tell the whole story. His opponents point out that the Congress(I) has never been averse to delaying matters when it has suited them. D. Ramachandran insists that he could have got his majority if he had been given the chance. As proof he points out that Karnataka Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde issued a statement following the withdrawal of Congress(I) support saying that "the Janata Party would try to prevent the Congress(I) from pulling down legally constituted governments".

But it was only two full days after the Congress(I) quit that the CPI(M) and IUML's along with two Janata members went to Chandy to throw in their lot with the DMK. Chandy, however, counters: "About seven MK legislators were themselves prepared to defect to the Congress(I)." He also faults D. Ramachandran "for not having the courtesy to resign even after his government was reduced to a minority. He could not produce evidence to show that he continued to enjoy majority support when I drew his attention to the fact that his government had been reduced to a minority."

With the imposition of President's Rule the current political drama now shifts from Pondicherry to Tamil Nadu where the Congress(I) will be trying to work out its new political equation with the AIADMK. The alliance is also bound to have its influence on the evolution of regional politics and its impact going to be felt in Tamil Nadu in the months to come.

S.H. VENKATRAMANI  
in Pondicherry

DIA TODAY, JULY 15, 1983

### MRS GANDHI

## Vienna Waltz

WHEN Prime Minister Indira Gandhi flew back home after her five-nation European tour, on June 19, she had reason to smile. The tour had certainly—as it had aimed to do—stirred western interest in India, particularly in Austria, where the sixth West Europe-India dialogue congress held in Alpbach, promised to stimulate economic cooperation between the two countries.

THE DAY after her arrival in Vienna, a cartoon in an Austrian daily caricatured a beaming Mrs Gandhi greeting Chancellor Sinowatz at the airport: "No—my name is Indira and not Helene Von Damm. You are also not Kreisky—are you?" The obvious implication was that the leaders of the two countries barely recognised each other. Helene Von Damm is the new US ambassador to Austria, and Kreisky the country's former chancellor.

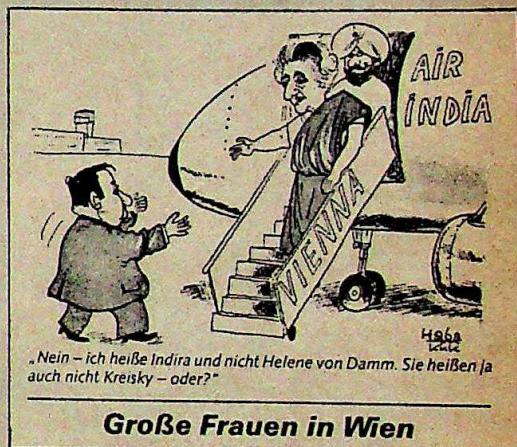
However, three days later, as Mrs Gandhi left elegant Vienna, the two premiers had already discussed a number of important issues—the world economic situation, Afghanistan, North-South dialogue, non-alignment and bilateral economic relations. Sinowatz praised Mrs Gandhi for her political foresight in world affairs and her balanced leadership of the non-aligned movement. India had clearly put its best foot forward.

**Concrete Results:** As a result of the meeting, the newly-formed Indo-Austrian Economic Commission will probably meet in October to identify areas for promoting bilateral economic cooperation. A large project of an Austrian steel company in India and joint Indo-Austrian ventures in third countries were also extensively discussed. Moreover, the supply of some 1,500 horses trained for Indian mountain troops in the Himalayas is soon to follow.

The Vienna Waltz, as Mrs Gandhi's visit has come to be called, was only the prelude. The real show was at Alpbach, in a charming little Tyrolean village. Here, over 500 politicians, industrialists, and economists, including about 150 of the Indian contingent congregated at the West Europe-India dialogue congress despite the simultaneously held summit of the European Community in Stuttgart

which drew away a considerable number of Alpbach's participants. The congress on India was the sixth of its kind since its inception after the Second World War.

**Mixed Reactions:** In her speech at Alpbach, Mrs Gandhi stressed the necessity of bringing peace to the world, of channelising arms' spending to the development of the Third World. India's Foreign Minister Narasimha Rao also appealed to West Europe to help towards achieving the New International Economic Order. Although the Austrian hosts spontaneously endorsed these appeals, an equally conducive reaction from other



### Große Frauen in Wien

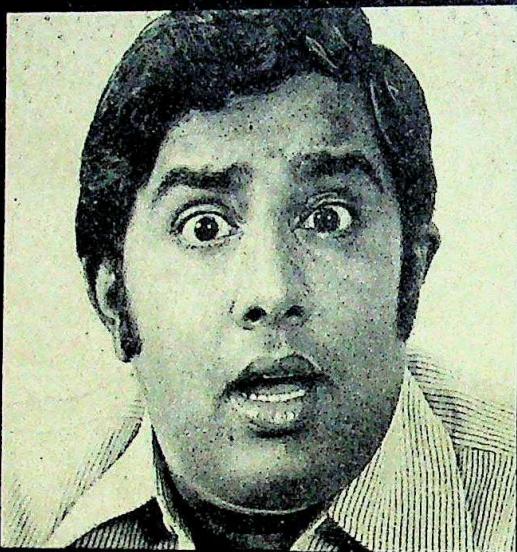
"No—my name is Indira Gandhi and not Helene Von Damm. You are also not Kreisky—are you?"

European countries like Britain and the Federal Republic of Germany was lacking, after their swing to conservatism. In fact Juergen Warnke, Bonn's minister for economic cooperation could hardly have pleased Indian delegates when he refused to loosen Bonn's purse-strings by highlighting the need for implementing the NATO resolution on modernisation.

Moreover, at the political forum of the congress, a few days after Mrs Gandhi's departure, V.H. Maurice Jones of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies charged Mrs Gandhi with being an "institution destroyer" and having destroyed the two great Indian institutions built by Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru—the Congress Party and "the steel frame". Incensed Indians charged right back asserting that the corruption of institutional processes was not an Indian speciality. In fact, such tendencies were clearly western. Whatever the differences of opinion, at least one thing was clear—Mrs Gandhi's whirlwind European tour had livened interest in India, which, of course, was her intention in the first place.

—MANIK MEHTA in Alpbach

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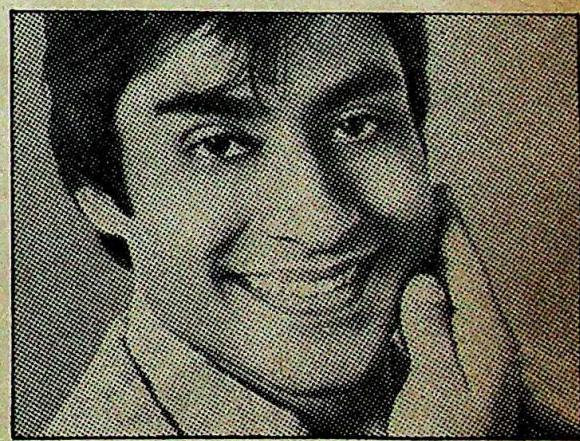
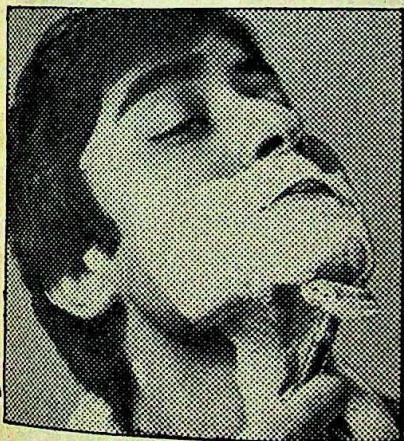
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# Miracle At Lord's



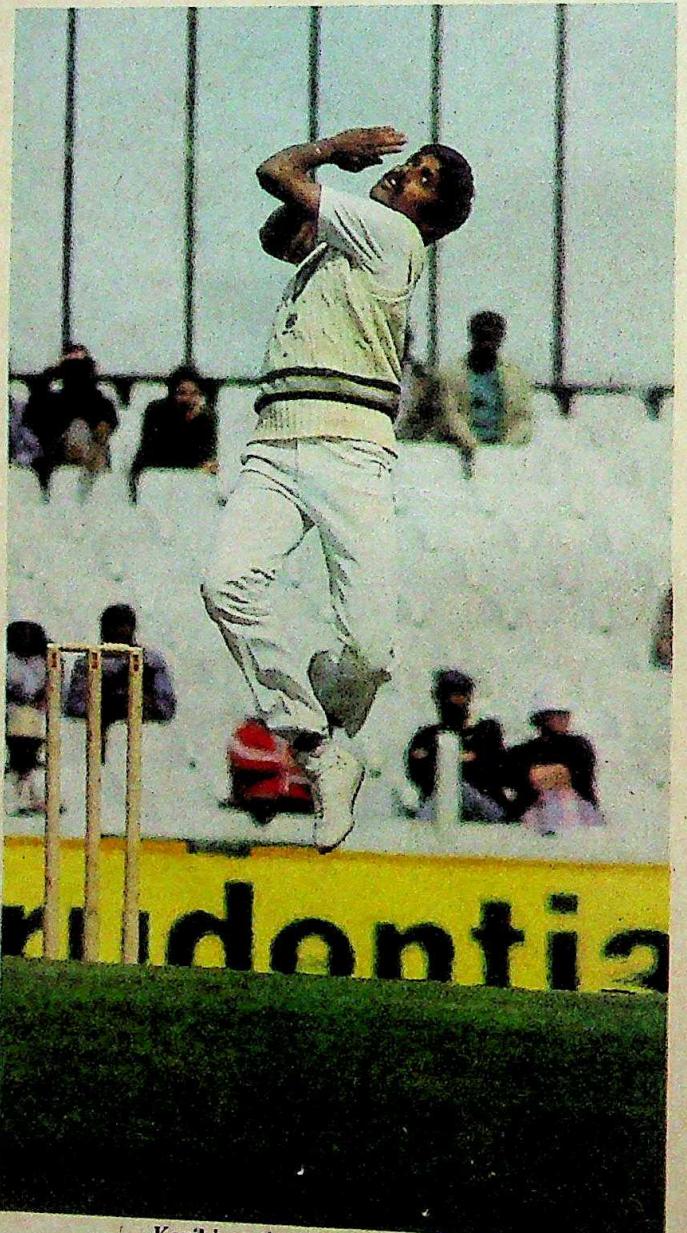


THERE are moments in sporting history that live forever. The epic Wimbledon final between Bjorn Borg and John McEnroe; Muhammad Ali slugging it out against Joe Frazier in Manila; and Italy's historic win in the World Cup football tournament in Spain. Last week, one more freeze was added to the list: Indian Cricket Captain Kapil Dev holding aloft the Prudential World Cup on the balcony at Lord's in London or gleefully spraying champagne on the frenzied crowds below. The latter, perhaps, was more appropriate, for it was a champagne summer for Indian cricket.

Starting as unfancied underdogs with London bookies offering 50:1 odds against them, the Indian eleven steered a triumphant if somewhat erratic course to a nail-biting cliff-hanger of a final against the seemingly invincible West Indies, undefeated in one-day cricket and winners of the previous two World Cup titles in 1975 and 1979.

It was undoubtedly India's—and international cricket's—finest hour. No comparable event can match the excitement and athletic heights which limited overs cricket achieves. The setting could not have been more perfect—England, where the World Cup originated and which is still the only country that can successfully stage such a spectacular show. Even the weather seemed overawed by the occasion, driving rain giving way gracefully to brilliant sunshine.

**Cricketing Giants:** On display was the cream of international cricket, men who are larger than their legends. The incomparable Vivian Richards, arguably the best batsman in the world today. The menacing West Indian pacemen, Joel Garner, Malcolm Marshall, Michael Holding and Andy Roberts, whose grace and fluidity is pure poetry. The Australians Dennis Lillee and Jeff Thomson, two of the fastest bowlers in history. The elegant David Gower and Ian Botham of England. Pakistan's run-machines Zaheer Abbas, Javed Miandad and the ever-dangerous Imran Khan.



**Kapil in action: inspiring leadership**  
PHOTOS BY SRENIK•SETT

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HOTUS BY SRENK • SETT

42

INDIA TODAY, JULY 15

INDIA TOD

Lawson, the Indian batting crumbled. At 9 for 4 it looked all over, bar the shouting. At 7 for 5, with the specialist batsmen back in the dressing-room, the large contingent of Indian supporters started getting up to their feet. And then stopped dead in their tracks as Kapil Dev played his most incredible innings of his career and, ultimately, of the World Cup.

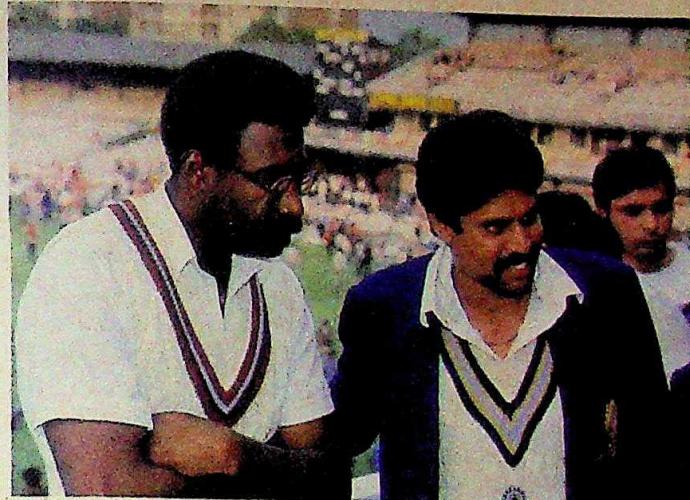
**Spirited Batting:** In a spiritedly equipped set-lifting display of controlled aggression, he hammered an Indians unbeaten 175, the highest individual score ever in a World Cup match and also the first collective century by an Indian in the tournament. Single-handedly, he had not bountrament. Single-handedly, he transformed imminent defeat into exciting victory.

Kim Hugo Elated but exhausted after the game, Kapil said: "That game almost tore me apart. I've never been so tired in my life."

Above all, the Indian win was a morale-booster on the eve of the crucial tie against Australia on June 20. Once humbled again, the Indian batting crackled in the tied—the highest score being 40. However, erratic bowling by Zimbabwe added 37 valuable extras to the score. But then by five wickets, tight, accurate medium pace bowling by Roger Binny and Madan Lal demolished the Australians for the lowest score recorded in the tournament. India were through to the semi-finals.

Even then, the experts were still descinding about India's chances. The *Guardian's* cricketing correspondent mournfully predicted: "India and not Australia will face England at Old Trafford. It will be a match of altogether less resonance and India are less difficulty for England." But others were more charitable. In Mohinder Amarnath, the Indian underdogs had suddenly become "Dev's Devils", and though London's bookmakers were still offering 50:1 odds that India would lose to England, the British press was interested enough to dig up the nugget that Roger Binny was the great grandson of a Scotman.

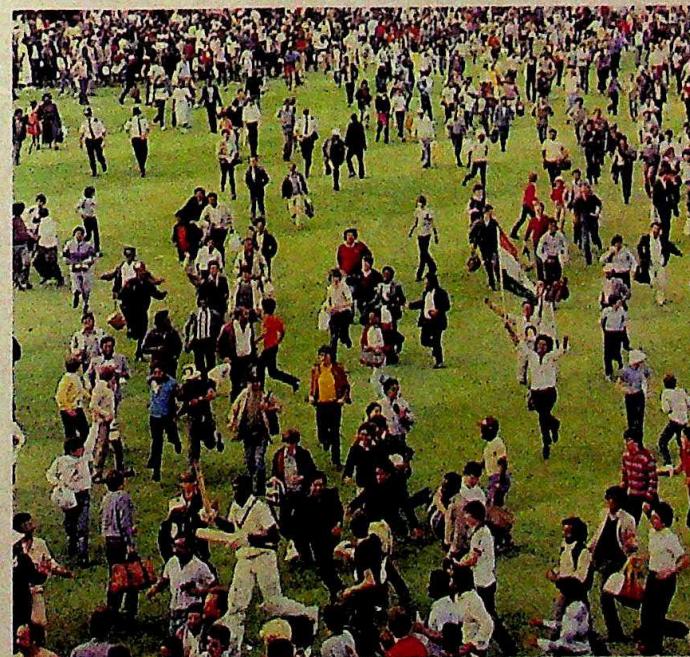
**Remarkable Win:** On a bright sunny morning, with



The two captains, Kapil and Lloyd, after India's historic win



The Indian side at Tunbridge Wells against Zimbabwe



Crowds invade Lord's after India's victory

England expected to grind India into the dust of Old Trafford, the excitement had nothing to do with the temperature of 79°F. In front of a full house, India demolished the myth of English superiority in this type of cricket with a remarkable victory by six wickets thanks largely to an explosive innings by Sandeep Patil and the deceptive bowling of Mohinder Amarnath and Kirti Azad.

There was stunned silence in the home crowd as they watched with mounting disbelief England's defeat take India into the finals. "It was the bowling of Mohinder and Kirti that was the turning point," said Kapil after the match. "We had a personal score to settle. We had been dismissed as not worthy of reaching the finals and me and my boys were out to prove them wrong."

The English Captain Bob Willis graciously conceded that "It was a top class team performance. The Indians played extremely well. They have been grossly underrated. I don't know why people always expect them to lose." English Vice Captain David Gower was more analytical in his reactions. Said he: "The Indians have really learned how to field in one-day cricket. But I believe it was their team-work and Kapil's astute captaincy that won them the game."

FROM Old Trafford to the miracle at Lord's. The odds had come down to a more respectable 5:2 against an Indian win. Even then, the possibility of India beating the formidable West Indies was wafer thin. The British media reflected that adequately enough. Except former English captain Tony Lewis. He mused: "For the first time I have seen an Indian side looking like it truly believes it can win the competition."

In the event, it turned out to be a match that will be replayed ball by ball wherever cricket lovers gather for quite some years to come. To chants of "Kapil, Kapil" and "India

**zindabad", India triumphed in the end but not without giving their supporters some major heart attacks.**

Sent in to bat on an easy-paced wicket, India were off to their customary bad start when Gavaskar was caught behind trying to steer through the slips with 2 runs on the board. At the other end, Srikanth, as if to atone for his senior colleague's sins, launched a blistering attack on the West Indian pace attack, particularly Roberts. Playing some superb strokes, he raced to 38 before he fell with the score at 59 for 2. Amarnath, the next man in, played in almost copybook fashion against the menacing pace of Garner and Marshall and with 90 on the board, India looked set for a big score.

**Sudden Setback:** Then came the dramatic reversal with both Amarnath and Yashpal Sharma gone in consecutive overs. The

disaster story continued after lunch with Kapil, the only man who looked capable of getting a big score, going for another big hit and holing out to long on after scoring just 15. Patil continued to play some attractive cricket but was rapidly running out of partners. Azad left in the second over after lunch and Binny followed almost immediately after, both playing upish shots to waiting fielders.

India had lost five wickets in the space of 37 balls and at 111 for 6, it appeared that it was going to be a one-sided final. Once Patil fell, to be followed by Madan Lal, India were reeling at 161 for 9 and only a last wicket stand of 22 between Kirmani and Sandhu pushed the score up to 183.

A score of 183 against the West Indies was hardly cause for concern in the Caribbean. But on the field, the Indian team

looked razor-sharp. Urged on constantly by Kapil, his bowlers went flat out. It was the taincy of the highest order. Undaunted by the meagre total, Kapil maintained pressure right through by offensive, accurate field placings. He had two slips for the first 15 of the early half and, even towards the end, still persisted with one slip in Gavaskar's move that was a risky gamble against the West Indians but which finally paid high dividends: Gavaskar snapped up two catches in that position.

**Aggressive Captaincy:** Kapil, with a huge grin on his face, made a difficult task look easy by dismissing danger man Vivian Richards; and then Mohinder Amarnath and Madan Lal did the rest with some intelligent and unrelentingly hostile bowling and nobodys to snatch an astonishing victory from the jaws of defeat.

## PROFILES

## Dev's Devils

*EXPERIENCE, youth, determination: the Indian team that beat West Indies, Zimbabwe, Australia and England to lift the glittering Prudential trophy had them all. Following are career profiles of the squad that made the miracle at Lord's possible. As limited overs statistics were not available, Test match figures have been given.*



**Sunil Manohar Gavaskar**, 33, has been around for a long time. 'Sunny' began with a bang in the West Indies in 1971, when he collected 774 against Gary Sobers's men. Gavaskar, at 5 ft 4 in, is only a half inch taller than fellow cricketer and brother-in-law G.R. Viswanath, has amassed 7,625 runs in 90 Tests, at an average of 52.23. With 27 centuries, he is only two short of Don Bradman's world record.

Gavaskar's strength is his copy-book technique, and it is this which has enabled him to score two centuries in a Test thrice, become the first Indian to carry the bat in a Test innings – at Faisalabad in Pakistan last winter – and be top scorer for India on 30 occasions.



**Krishnamachari Srikanth**, 23, is a sixes and fours man. A newcomer to international cricket – six Tests, 147 runs, average 16.23, highest 65 – he is an ebullient batsman who can tear any attack apart, as he almost did in the Lord's

finals. 'Anna' began his Test career against England. In Pakistan, he didn't do very well in the Tests, but produced a string of big scores in the other matches. Srikanth is also a brilliant fielder, with an accurate eye for the run-out chance and a powerful, accurate throw.

**Dilip Balwant Vengsarkar**, 27, also known as 'Colonel' and 'Sleepy', is a pillar of the top order, and usually bats at number three. One of the most experienced and battle-hardened members of the team – 63 Tests, 3,484 runs at an average of 37.46 with six centuries – Vengsarkar has time and again made big scores over a respectable length of time to win a match or pull it out of the fire, as at Lord's in 1979 when he scored a century and saved India from defeat. He can also keep wickets in an emergency.

**Mohinder Bhardwaj Amarnath**, 32, the man of the third Prudential World Cup for India, made his debut as far back as 1969–70, after which he did not play for the country until 1975–76. He was reinstated in 1979, but was dropped again after the England and Australia tours. The great comeback began in Pakistan last year when the "chest-on" stance that 'Jimmy' adopted allowed him to tackle Imran with confidence when others were taking regular walks back to the pavilion. The series brought him 584 runs, and the subsequent five Tests in the West Indies another 598 – the discard had transformed himself into one of India's finest batsmen. He now has 2,648 runs

from 37 Tests at an average of 44.88 and has hit seven centuries. His casual right arm gentle medium pacers can be deadly, as India's opponents discovered recently.

**Mulkraj Yashpal Sharma**, 28, is one of the most tenacious batsmen in the side. He made his debut in 1979 and has been dropped from the team once or twice. But 'Pappu' has always made it back into the team, as much for his grit as his fielding – he is a sharp cover fielder. He has played in 33 Tests, amassed 1,550 runs at an average of 36.90, and hit two centuries.

**Ramal Nikhanj Kapil Dev**, 24, captain of India, is arguably the best all-rounder in the world today – although Ian Botham will no doubt have something to say to that. The statistics say it all: 53 Tests, 2,253 runs, average 32.65, three centuries. (Ian Botham is better on paper: 59 Tests, 3,266 runs, average 36.69, 11 centuries.) Kapil has also taken 206 wickets, at an average of 29.52 runs per wicket. (Here again Botham has an edge: 267 wickets at 24.47 runs apiece.)

Kapil has just been chosen as one of Wisden's five cricketers of the year 1982. He is the youngest to capture 200 or more Test wickets – only two others have done so before the age of 30 – and has thus completed the 'double double': 200 wickets and 2,000 runs in Tests. His infectious enthusiasm for the game and 'lead-from-the-front' captaincy was in large measure responsible for that incredible moment when he raised the Prudential trophy high in the air on June 25, 1983, at Lord's.

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When the West Indies walked out to bat the accompaniment of raucous calypsos, the only comfort the Indian team had was the fact that the Caribbeans are prone to aumble under pressure. When Sandhu slumped back Greenidge's off stump with a ball that turned back and which the experienced opener incredibly left alone, tension started building up. But Richards played some classic strokes all round the wicket and at 50 for 1, it looked like the bookies had been right. Then came that well-judged catch of Kapil off Richards and the tide suddenly turned. It was obvious to every one that the West Indies were victims of overconfidence.

Like a pride of lions that has smelled blood, the Indian team closed in for the kill. With some help from the field, the Indian team closed in for the kill. Nobody at Lord's was in any doubt that they could do it. Kapil himself was like a coiled spring, clenching and unclenching his

fists, bouncing up and down on his heels. His energy transmitted itself to the rest of the field. Gomes was snapped up by Gavaskar in the slips and an injured Lloyd holed out to Kapil.

**Crucial Advantage:** At 76 for 6, India were slowly wresting the advantage and history was in the making. The tension mounted palpably as a seventh wicket stand between Dujon and Marshall took the score to 119, before it was left to the valiant Mohinder Amarnath, coming back for a second spell, to make the crucial break by bowling Dujon. He followed this up with the wicket of Marshall. Kapil accounted for Roberts and Amarnath deservedly put the final nail in the coffin by accounting for Holding.

For Lord's, the Mecca of international cricket, it was a scene worthy of its eminence. Jubilant crowds turned the ground into a

carnival with the cymbals and bongos of the West Indian supporters in disharmonious rhythm with the *dholaks* and temple bells of the Indian supporters.

That it was a miracle was evident from the fact that the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) found itself in an embarrassing position when it had no passes for the Indian pressmen covering the event. The reason: they had not expected the Indians to reach the finals. So intense and emotion-charged were the final moments of the match that 14 people were arrested for drunken behaviour.

**Accolades:** But nobody at Lord's on that historic day, whether British or West Indian, could grudge India that glorious moment when Kapil lifted the glittering World Cup high into the air in triumph, while huge crowds below danced the *bhangra*. For once, the critics had been

Sandeep Madhusudan Patil, 26, was the man who hit Bob Willis for six fours in an over last year, who hammered 174 off Lillee, Pascoe and company, and whose drive for four off Imran Khan off his knee at Faisalabad in Pakistan was considered the best shot of the recent Indo-Pak series. 'Sandy' has, in three-odd years, collected 1,254 runs in 20 Tests at an average of 43.24, with three centuries. His style of batting is ideally suited to one-day cricket, as was evident when he drove, pulled and lofted England's bowlers to score 51 not out to take India to victory in the Prudential semi-final last fortnight.

Syed Mujtaba Husain Kirmani, 33, took over from Farokh Engineer in 1975-76 after a long understudy period. Since then, he has crouched behind the stumps in 69 Tests, scored 2,100 runs at an average of 24.70, with one century. He has also caught 128 batsmen and stumped 32, thus becoming the only Indian wicket-keeper to do the double: 1,000 and more runs and 100 or more victims.

As a measure of his experience—of India's current squad, only Gavaskar has played more Tests—'Kiri' (also known as 'Ganga Hassan') was made vice-captain of the team that toured the West Indies this year but had a lean tour—and the vice-captaincy went to Mohinder. Kirmani has claimed six victims in a Test thrice. He does take off the gloves sometimes: he has bowled one ball in Test cricket but that was a no-ball.

Roger Michael Binny, 28, is a useful all-rounder, just how useful came to light last fortnight when his accurate medium pace did a little more than its bit to get India the trophy. He has played nine Tests for the country, scored 198 runs—highest 46—at an unimpressive average of 15.23. But he is an asset for any side, because quite apart from his bowling—15 Test wickets at 42.13 runs each—he is an excellent fielder. Incidentally, 'Jackie' and Sanjay Desai knocked up a record 451 for the first wicket for Karnataka against Kerala in 1977-78—and were still there when the innings was closed. Binny scoring 211 not out.

Kirti Bhagwat Jha Azad, 24, made his Test debut in 1980-81 but has not quite lived up to expectations, with 107 runs in four Tests at an average of 17.83. However, his slow off-breaks were invaluable in the World Cup competition, tying spin-shy batsmen to their crease, keeping the run rate down, and capturing some crucial wickets in the process.

Madan Lal Udharam Sharma, 32, is like a rubber ball—he keeps bouncing back into the team and game. 'Muddy' is a never-say-die player, extremely competitive on the field, and refuses to wilt even when his medium pace gets the stick. He has played in 31 Tests, scoring 762 runs at an average of 20.59. His highest is 55 not out. He is the ideal foil to Kapil Dev in the medium pace attack—64 Test

wickets at 36.95 runs apiece—and, not the least, he is a brilliant, hard-running fielder—nobody will forget his fantastic catch to dismiss Peter Toohey of Australia at Sydney in the 1977-78 series.

Ravi Shankar Jayadrith Shastri, 20, was an emergency recruit in the 1980-81 tour of New Zealand when he was flown down to make up the eleven for the Test at Wellington. Shastri captured three wickets in four balls in that Test and finished the series with 15 wickets at an average of 18. His orthodox left-arm spin had brought him into the side, but his batting soon strengthened his position. In 19 Tests he has taken 42 wickets at about 40 runs each. He has also scored 669 runs, at an average of 30.40, with two centuries.

Balwinder Singh Sandhu, 26, a medium pace bowler, made his mark as a batsman on his debut in Pakistan when he scored 71. 'Ballu' is able to swing the ball and this, more than his pace, has accounted for the nine wickets he has taken in seven Tests, at 53.22 runs apiece. He has also scored 206 runs at an average of 34.33.

Sunil Valson, 25, was the player whose selection earlier this year for the World Cup squad created a bit of a furore. Ironically, the left arm medium pacer did not play in the tournament.

JAGANNATH DUBASHI

silenced and never more effectively so.

"Kapil's men turn world upside down" screamed the London *Times* headline while the report went on to term India as "cannon-fodder turned cannon". The losing captain, Clive Lloyd gave full credit to Kapil. "He's been able to rally the entire team behind him," said Lloyd admiringly, adding: "He's really done a marvellous job." Tragically, Lloyd relinquished his captaincy one day before the final when he announced that he would no longer captain the side. His successor will probably be Vice-Captain Vivian Richards.

Pataudi, who had flown in from Bombay the day before the match, was wreathed in smiles. "This is India's finest hour" was all he could manage. Farokh Engineer, the Britain-based businessman and former Indian Test star, was more loquacious: "There has been a tremendous improvement in the fielding since my days," he acknowledged.

**Team Effort:** The heroes of the side, sipping champagne in the dressing-room, took the victory in their stride, a true reflection of the enormous confidence they now have in their own ability. "We were always the underdogs and this has given us more incentive," remarked Vice-Captain Mohinder Amarnath. Roger Binny, who played such a crucial role in India's march to Lord's and captured the highest number of wickets in

the tournament was exultant. "We have done enough for our grandchildren to talk about," he said somewhat immodestly.

Added Man Singh, the phlegmatic but friendly Indian team manager: "We clicked because every man threw in everything he had and Kapil led from the front." And no man deserved higher credit than a visibly elated Kapil Dev who sprayed champagne on cheering crowds from the balcony at Lord's in benediction and also in acknowledgement of their contribution.

But if that widely-publicised action was symbolic of a christening, there could have been nothing more fitting. The transformation in the Indian team was as if they had been born again. For once, the Indian selectors had picked a side that was admirably equipped for one-day cricket. Unlike five-day cricket, a limited overs game is a true test of courage and skill. Limited to 60 overs, the batsmen have to score at a rapid rate with no scope or time for grafting.

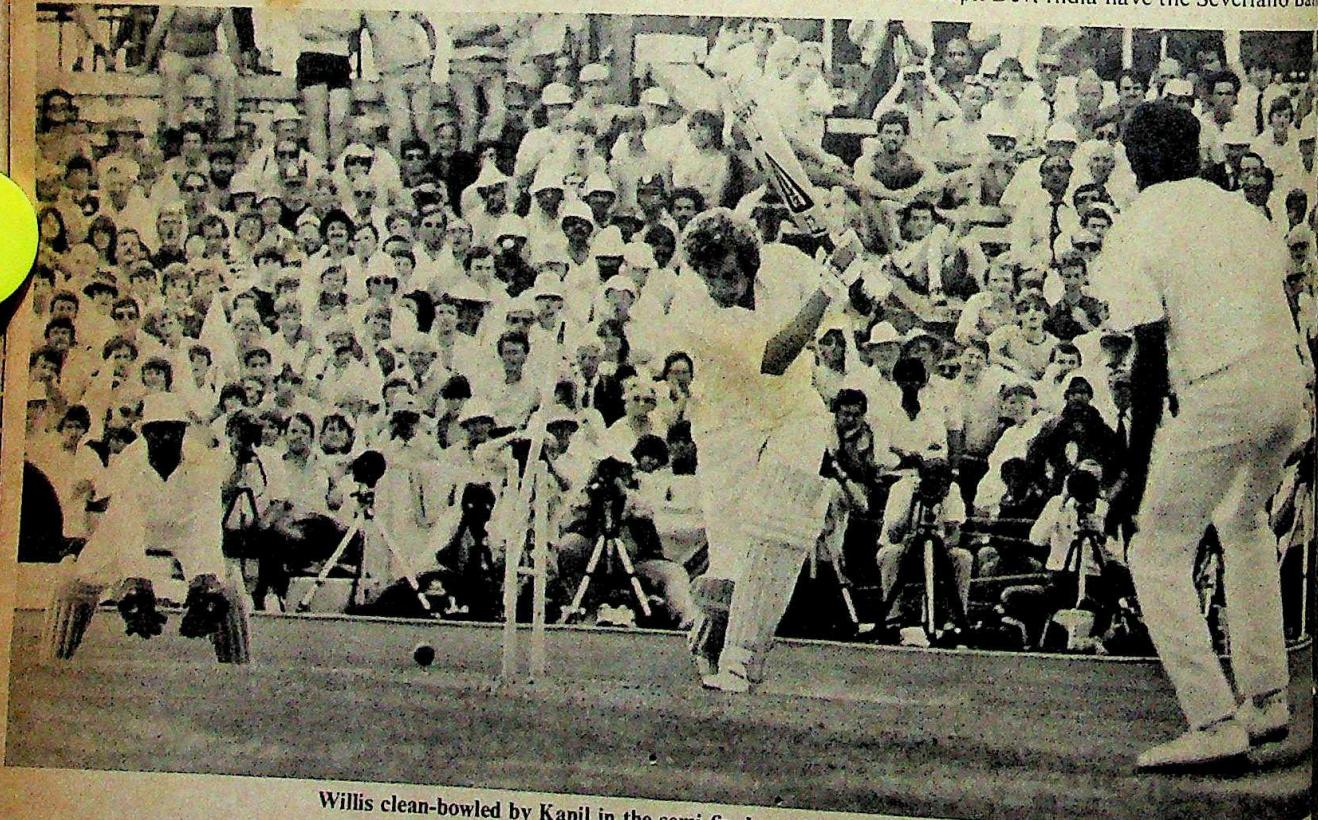
**Versatile Side:** In Srikkanth and Patil, India had hard-hitting bats capable of negotiating any type of bowling; and battle-hardened veterans like Amarnath and Yashpal Sharma to stave off a collapse. The bowling attack was hardly hostile in pace but more than made up by fulfilling the requirements of the one-day cricket with tight accurate bowling. Kapil, Sandhu, Amarnath, Madan Lal, Binny and off-spinner Kirti

Azad all struck vital blows for India at crucial stages and also restricted the opposition to beatable scores.

But what finally gave India the edge in the fielding and Kapil's shrewd captaincy fact, the two are interrelated. When Kapil first was appointed captain, he had INDIA TODAY (February 28, 1983) that first priority would be fielding. Says Kapil now: "For too long has India's fielding been considered a joke. I will not accept any who does not give his all in the field."

He demonstrated that by flying back to Bombay in the middle of his county commitments to Northamptonshire to be present when the team was being selected. Back in England, Kapil drove the players relentlessly, often keeping them out on the practice ground for six hours a day practising catches and sharpening their fielding.

In one-day cricket, a good fielding side has a decisive advantage, and this is easily the best fielding side that India has ever produced. Srikkanth in the covers was outstanding, as was the quietly efficient Yashpal Sharma. It has been a long time since Indian supporters have witnessed the sight of four Indian fielders racing to head off a ball with such enthusiasm and understanding. And the man responsible for that is undoubtedly Kapil Dev. As Joe Woodcock of *The Times* remarked: "Kapil Dev, India have the Severiano Ballesteros of fielding."



Willis clean-bowled by Kapil in the semi-finals: outclassing all opposition

KAPIL DEV

# "I Did My Job"

AFTER the Indian team's historic win over the West Indies at Lord's, Kapil Dev, sipping champagne, spoke to INDIA TODAY'S SREEDHAR PILLAI. Excerpts:

**Q. How did a team which was written off even before the tournament started win the Prudential World Cup?**

A. India started the tournament as underdogs. But our fielding and team spirit saw us through to the final. I know the capabilities of my boys and understand where we stood in batting and bowling. It was the fielding that got us the Prudential Cup.

**Q. Any factors other than fielding?**

A. It was a team effort. No single individual is responsible. All of us collectively clicked as a team. Each and every member of the team did something or the other to ensure that we won.

**Q. Any particular individual you would like to single out?**

A. Not in particular. But Binny, Madan Lal and Mohinder bowled extremely well, while Yashpal and Mohinder saw that the batting never crumbled. But we were a little sad that our major batsman Sunil Gavaskar never clicked.

**Q. What about your own 175 not out against Zimbabwe?**

A. Well, I did my job as captain, nothing more than that. When I came in to bat it was 9 for 4, which became 17 for 5. Then my only thought was to play for my country, and stay put for 60 overs and score a modest total of around 200.

**Q. Any special memories of that 175, which is a Prudential record?**

A. When I got to my hundred I was very happy to be the first Indian to score a hundred in the World Cup competition. Only much later did I realise that I had broken Glenn Turner's record.

**Q. After being 17 for 5, did you warn your team for a dismal batting performance?**

A. No, I was feeling absolutely tired after that match against Zimbabwe. In fact, I told the boys, "You made me tired."

**Q. How do you analyse India's win, with their gentle medium pace bowling?**

A. Let me tell you that these medium pace bowlers ridiculed by the critics were one of the major reasons for India's winning the World Cup. All they did was bowl straight by keeping a good length

and line. They never tried to bowl fast but English conditions favoured us. Our medium pacers were able to swing the ball around and with batsmen committing mistakes our fielders did the rest.



**"I know the capabilities of my boys and understand where we stood in batting and bowling. It was the fielding that got us the Prudential Cup."**

**Q. So you mean to say there was a lot of stress on fielding?**

A. In fact, the team was chosen with special stress on fielding. I had made it clear to everyone that I would not tolerate lack of effort. I can accept that batsmen will get out and that bowlers will get hit but I will not accept one who does not give his all in the field. For too long India's fielding was considered a joke; not any more, I hope.

**Q. So the selectors have to be thanked for choosing a well-balanced team.**

A. The Prudential Cup has given India a big boost in one-day cricket. We had no extraordinary players. But we had bowlers who could bat right up to number eleven. It was the best one-day team that the country has ever produced

and we seem to be improving more and more in this particular field.

**Q. Many people feel that India played West Indies better than any other side.**

A. The best thing that could have happened to us prior to the Prudential Cup was our visit to the West Indies. There we defeated them in Guyana in a one-day international. It was a turning point in our one-day cricket. And later we defeated them again at Old Trafford. Playing against the best in the world brings out the best in my boys.

**Q. What about Sunil Gavaskar? There were rumours that you dropped him after the first two games for reasons other than what were given out.**

A. Nothing but dressing-room gossip. In fact we dropped him because he was injured. Even if he is out of form and slightly slow on the field we will include him because he is our main batsman. There is perfect harmony and rapport between us. Sometimes I go to him for advice. I am proud of Sunil and his achievements and I wish him good luck this winter to beat Bradman's record.

**Q. Will the same team be retained for the coming winter Test series against West Indies and Pakistan?**

A. Test cricket is a different sort of cricket altogether. Some players who are good for one-day cricket may be a handicap in a Test match.

**Q. Any special request for the Indian cricket board after the Prudential Cup?**

A. They should introduce more one-day tournaments in domestic cricket and spot fresh talent to enable us to retain the next World Cup.

**Q. Some experts feel you are burning yourself out by playing for Northamptonshire in English county cricket.**

A. After playing professional cricket I have improved vastly and it has also helped me to be a successful captain. The West Indians and Pakistanis play one-day cricket so well because they play for English counties.

**Q. How would you compare yourself with Ian Botham?**

A. Ian is a great cricketer. Perhaps he is struggling a little at the moment. Who is best is not for me to say. But I know that I have extra incentive to do well when I play against him.

**Q. What about these rumours that an Indo-Pakistan eleven has been signed up to tour South Africa? Will you go?**

A. During the World Cup tournament even I've heard these stories. But so far nobody has approached me. Even if they approach me I will not go to South Africa. I love to play for my country more than anything else.

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ers of the game, a man capable of heroics."

**A**FTER the World Cup, nobody is in any doubt that the disputed title of the best all-rounder in the game now belongs to Kapil. But it is his captaincy that has flowered into full bloom. He has acquired a maturity that was not in evidence before. On the field, he was a constant inspiration exhorting his team to greater heights. Off the field, he is an amiable and modest colleague, tendering advice and consoling failures.

His field placings were, for the most part, highly professional and well thought out. Every match was played to a predetermined plan. Each time India looked in trouble, Kapil's shrewd bowling changes swung the game back in their favour. He, unlike his more experienced predecessors, has no hesitation in taking advice on the field from his players, particularly Gavaskar.

On innumerable occasions, he consulted Gavaskar, a measure of his maturity and uncomplicated nature. It is undoubtedly he who has moulded the Indian team into a winning combination. As he himself acknowledges: "We have no brilliant players but as a side we give all to the game and work very hard for each other."

**Personal Example:** There lay the difference. For too long has Indian cricket been hamstrung by personal rivalries, inner tensions, regional loyalties and, above all, the crippling call of commercialism. One man, in the short space of time as captain, counsellor

and friend, has altered all that—mainly by personal example.

Says his coach and mentor Desh Prem Azad who trained Kapil when the latter was a gangly schoolboy in Chandigarh: "Kapil has got to the top the hard way and that is his greatest asset. He used to train eight to 10 hours a day of strenuous physical exercises.



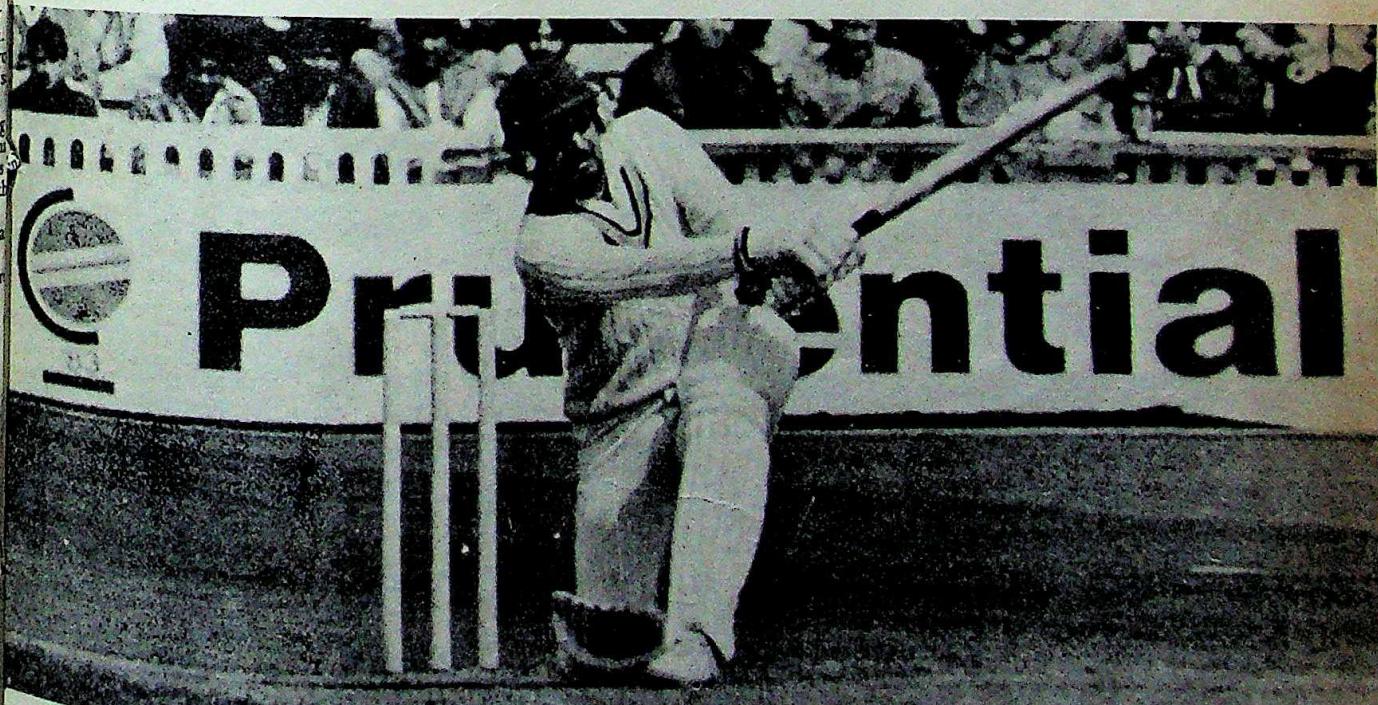
Yashpal: gritty batting

He was the perfect learner: devoted and diligent, with no short cuts. He has tremendous fighting power and at the same time is capable of personal sacrifices. That is what makes a truly great leader."

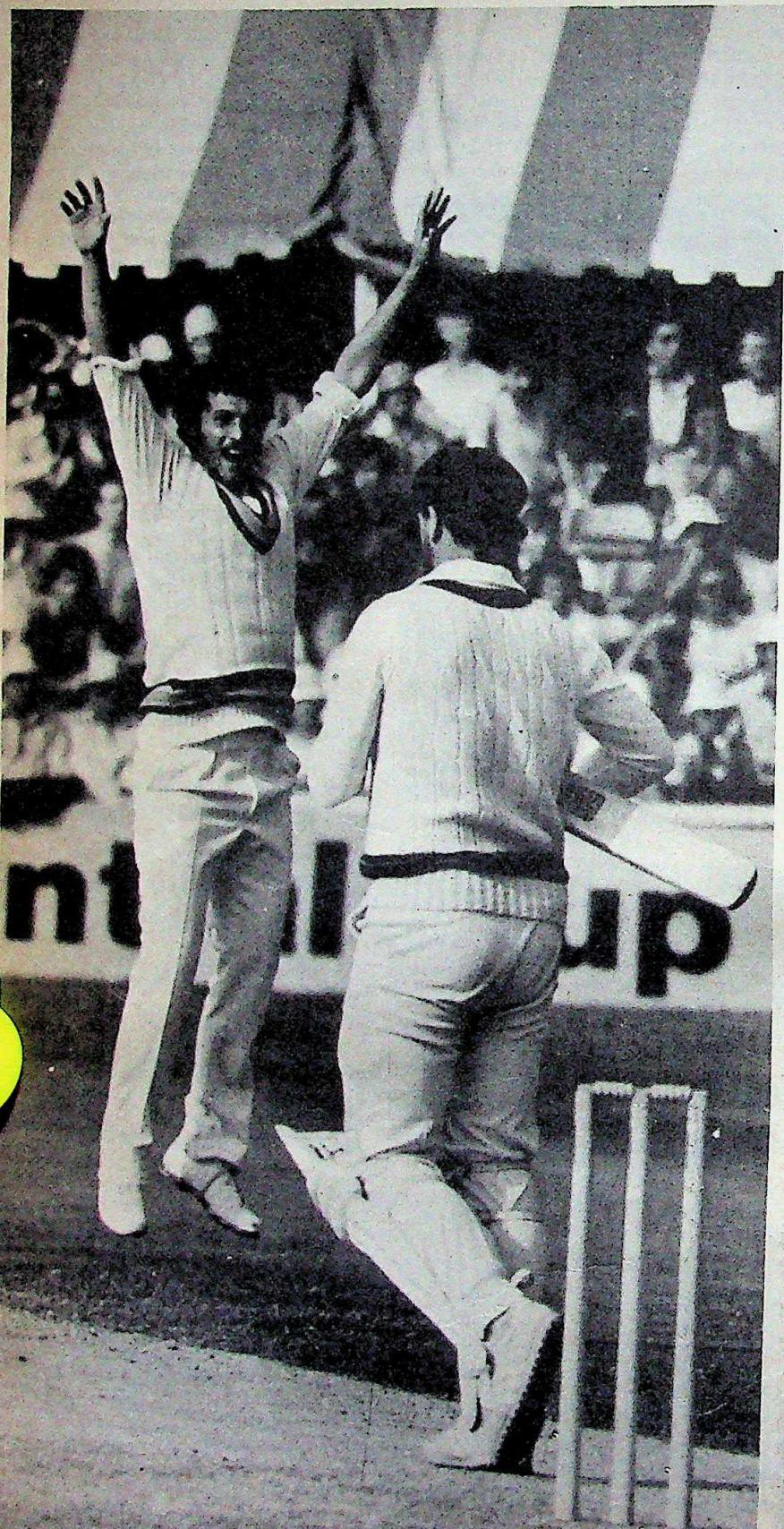
Adds Kapil's mother, Raj Kumari, 55: "His success is the result of hard work. He gave up college to concentrate on his cricket and nobody has any regrets." Kapil's younger sister, Pinky, had no doubts that India and her brother would do well. "I just knew his devotion to the game would bring him glory in the end. It is one thing to be a top cricketer but another to be a good human being and Kapil is both."

**Collective Effort:** But Kapil himself will be the first to admit that it was heroic team effort and not any individual performance that powered India to its greatest cricketing victory. As Tony Lewis remarked of the Indian side: "What have they got? Perhaps more than anything else they have star quality, a love of the heroic and a delight in being underestimated." Limited overs cricket is tailor-made for the underdogs. Witness Zimbabwe's stunning victory over Australia and India's own upsets throughout the tournament.

Even before the World Cup, Kapil or the 'Haryana Hurricane' as he has been dubbed by the cricketing press, had already inscribed his name in the record books (see box). But the record books will fail to record his contribution to India's win which was as much a result of his inspiring leadership as his individual performance. Says Geoff



Patil sweeps one to the fence: a touch of class

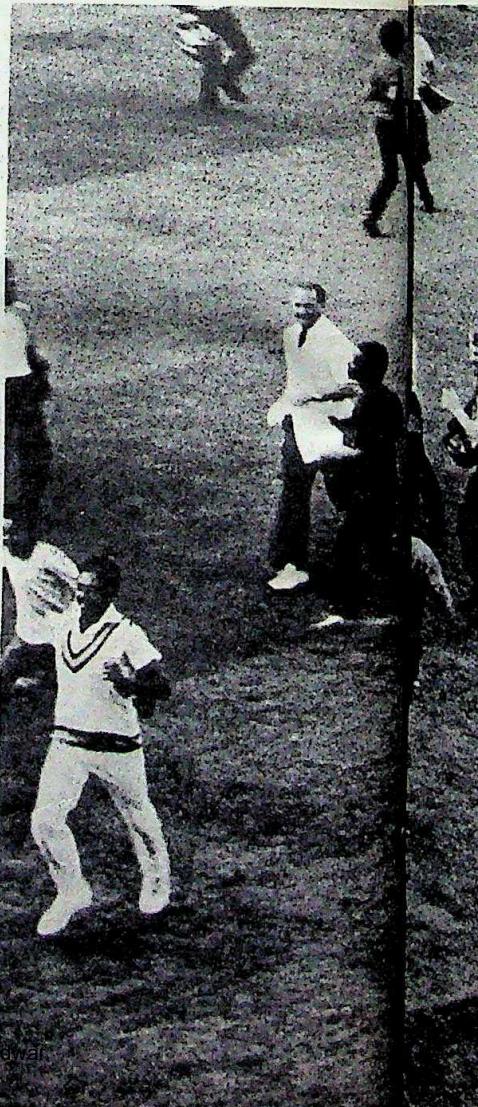


Cook, his county captain at Northamptonshire: "I have not met many cricketers with his unbounding enthusiasm for the game and he has transmitted that to the team. He has sorted out the donkeys from the thoroughbreds."

But what of the future? India has proved that they are world beaters in one-day cricket but with Prudential having opted out of sponsoring the World Cup, it could be the last one unless some other sponsor steps into the breach. There are already talk of hosting the World Cup elsewhere than England, which may not be practical. No other country has so many good pitches and centres within a four-hour drive too far away. Logistically, therefore, England remains the cricketers' Mecca.

**Different Requirements:** Without work much World Cup, supremacy once again rests with the traditional five-day game and for that requirement is vastly different. Gavaskar, the tourno

Binny jumps in joy after dismissing England opener Tavaré (left), and the Indians race towards the pavilion after winning the final against Australia.



at North... despite his string of poor scores of late, is still any cricket ideal opening bat. Srikanth, on the other hand, with his penchant to go for the siasm for bowling immediately, may not fit the bill in a five-day series. Amarnath and Sharma are donkeys that to pertinaces; and Patil is of obvious class as ? India batsman. Vengsarkar is nearing the end of his career and it will be surprising if he finds a place in the team against the West Indies and world Cup, Pakistan this winter. That leaves the middle s some of order slightly vulnerable.

Sandhu and Kapil are by far the best World Opening bowlers in the country at the moment. Madan Lal is still capable of heroic effort but his pace is appreciably slower and he too has not much mileage left to go. Shastri, therefore, so unsuited to one-day cricket, should find himself back in the side but will have to work much harder than he has done so far to gain restive nod. Kirti Azad's chances have considerably brightened with his performance in the tournament but much will depend on how many bowlers Kapil will want.

A second spinner is absolutely vital to Indian five-day cricket on Indian wickets and Azad is the best bet for that job. Binny,

who has been the real find of the series, has vastly improved as a player of all-round ability and should walk into the team quite effortlessly. Kirmani was given up for good after the West Indies tour earlier this year but has redeemed himself by his performance in the World Cup. He is, however, much slower in his reflexes but still the best wicket-keeper around in the country.

Odds are that India will stick to the time-honoured tenet of cricket that one does not change a winning side. Kapil has worked hard to forge the eleven into a formidable force and will hardly like to introduce major changes at this stage.

**Heady Euphoria:** But right now, nobody is really worrying too much about the future. The heady euphoria of India's World Cup sensation is still very much in evidence and it will be some time before sobriety replaces that incredible high. Exactly 51 years after India's entry into Test cricket, they have turned fantasy into reality. And returned considerably richer in the bargain.

The team earned £20,000 for their victory; Britain-based industrialist Swraj Paul

in a characteristically flamboyant gesture promised £2,500 to the team if they won; while Sandeep Patil, Yashpal Sharma, Kapil Dev, Roger Binny each earned £200 for winning Man of the Match awards, with Amarnath winning £1,000 for the two occasions on the semi-final and final when he won the award. In fact, six Man of the Match awards speaks volumes for the incredible team-work that structured India's win.

However, nobody is going to grudge the Indians their sudden wealth. No hero's welcome awaits them since the team is only returning home briefly before some go to America while the rest, including Kapil, will continue their county commitments in England. But that, somehow, is in the fitness of things. This is a side that has no need of the fawning and hero-worshipping that surrounds an Indian cricket victory. For the first time in history, India has a team that is dedicated, highly professional and highly motivated. As Clive Lloyd said at the end of the finals: "Indian cricket has arrived. And it's here to stay."

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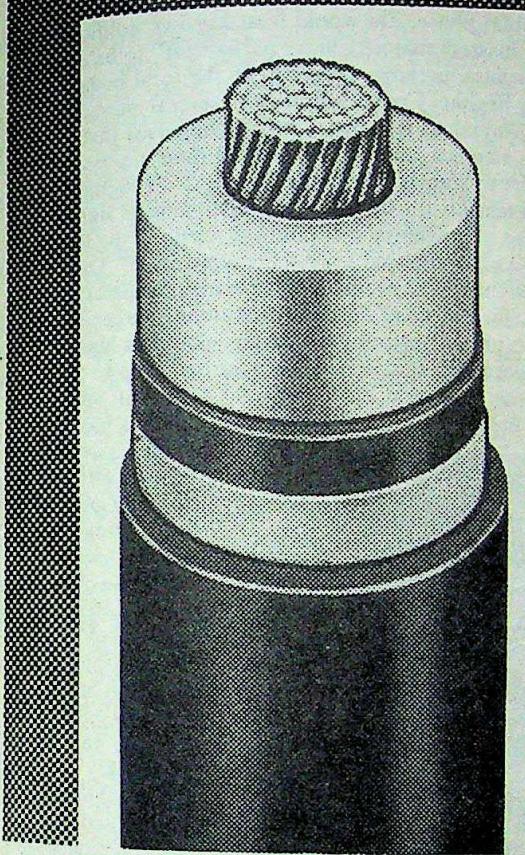
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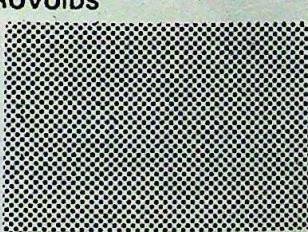


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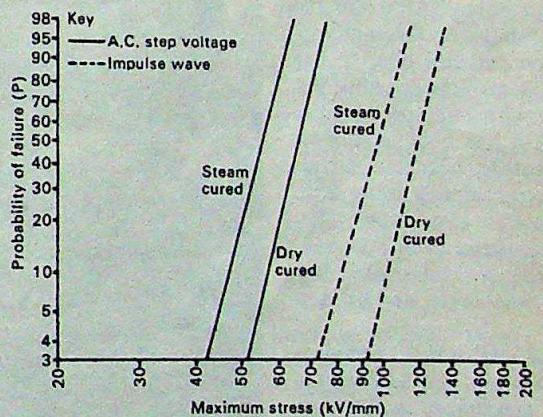
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PAKISTAN

# Zia's Triple Handshake



PAKISTANIS have coined a phrase that aptly describes the behavioural style of the Zia-ul-Haq military regime: "Double embrace and triple handshake." Zia has just completed the sixth year of his rule. On August 14 he is slated to proclaim changes in the regime, giving it aspects of an "Islamic democracy". Early June, nobody in Islamabad knew what Zia-ul-Haq was cooking. No one expected him to concede even the semblance of a truly representative government.

"In the war of attrition between the regime and the political forces," observed an eminent journalist, "Zia has acquired a definite edge. The Movement for Restoration of Democracy (MRD) has not been able to launch a potent movement or struggle for restoration of representative government. Now, in August, it will see the formal burial of the 1973 Constitution, after which nothing will remain of the democratic interlude under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto except bitter-sweet memories, not even the smile of the Cheshire cat in Alice's wonderland."

**Successful Policy:** "The policy of double embrace and triple handshake has worked better than most of us expected," conceded an editor in Islamabad. "Zia-ul-Haq has acted with great caution both on the domestic front and in foreign policy. Although the political elements have consistently refused to cooperate with him, he has treated the leaders of the erstwhile political parties with circumspection if not respect. He has combined compassion with ruthlessness, and he conducts an open presidency in the sense that he is accessible to everyone. There's a lot of frustration in Pakistan, especially amongst intellectuals. But there is very little anger, and no despair."

Mushahid Hussain, perspicacious young editor of *The Muslim*, the only English newspaper in Pakistan that breathes whiffs of fresh air, believes that Zia has finally embarked upon a process which he, Hussain, calls "Ayubisation" of martial law. In April, Zia undertook a mass-contact tour of the interior of Sind and the heartland of Punjab, addressing "civic jalsas". He confessed at a press conference that he was "as much a politician as anyone else". Taking his cue from Zia's latest political behaviour Mushahid Hussain concluded that by the spring of 1984, Zia would launch his own political party as the third and final step towards "Ayubisation".

The first step would come in August with the announcement of Zia's much-vaunted "new political structure" for Pakistan. He will give firm indications of his intention to wear "political clothes" instead of the star-studded uniform of a general. He will also launch a nation-wide campaign of mass contact. In the second phase, Zia would call for election to local bodies, hoping that this time at least a section of the political heavyweights would take part in them. In the

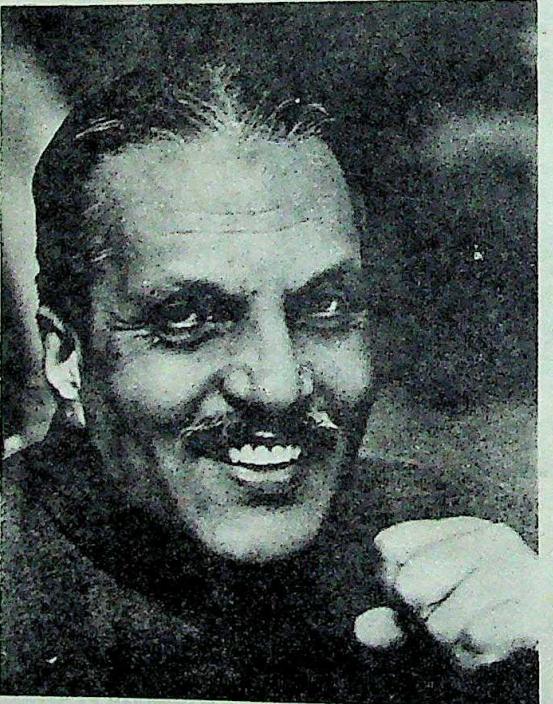
third and final phase, Zia would float his own political party to establish a massive majority in a "parliament" to be elected under unlimited franchise, perhaps indirectly by the local bodies.

**Strong Regime:** Conversations with several journalists and academics in Islamabad revealed a broad consensus that the military regime was stronger and stabler in 1983 than it appeared to be in 1981. Failure to launch a credible movement in two-and-a-half years has created tension among the eight constituents of MRD in which the language of a professor of political science, "the Pakistan People's Party is now polarised against the other seven". Others interviewed claimed that the Movement's "three major expectations" had fallen through. Instead of a growing rift among the generals, the military junta is united around Zia-ul-Haq; indeed its highest decision-making apparatus is said to have been narrowed down to a caucus of three generals—General Zia-ul-Haq, Lt-Gen Arif, who is chief of staff to the President, and Lt-Gen (retired) Yakub Khan, minister of external affairs. MRD's second expectation was that tension with India would reach a critical point obliging Zia to return the levers of power to civilian hands. And its third expectation was that the Soviets would put intolerable pressure on Pakistan creating a political-security crisis which Zia could handle alone without the active co-operation of the political forces.

MRD, however, is bracing itself for what its spokesmen call the "final struggle for democracy" to be launched in August, though nobody knows what form and content the struggle would take, which would be its main centres, and what element of the population it hopes to draw into the struggle. Signs of urban unrest continue to signal that the regime faces public disapproval.

**Popular Strategy:** On June 21, a summary military court at Dighri sentenced three Pakistanis—a known poet, a landlord, and a political activist—to one year's hard labour and five lashes each. Reports of this kind are frequently tucked away in the depths of the self-censored news-papers. Political leaders are staying away from places where they have mobilised people for protestations. Students, lawyers and sections of industrial workers frequently launch low-key agitations and sometimes violently clash with forces of law and order. But the cumulative political impact of these actions has been too small to cause the regime much worry. Pakistan is not sizzling.

Zia's personal leadership qualities seem to have paid dividends. Conscious of his vulnerabilities, he has pursued a policy of least change and infinite patience. Apart from dismantling the shaky, rootless representative superstructure built by Bhutto, he has kept the political economy of Pakistan very much intact. Of course, he has also done away with Bhutto's "socialism", but that too, democracy, was alien to Pakistan's soil. He has been in no hurry to introduce Islam as feudal postings and civil servant its people. Moreover, at every military off Government self-centr press. "Self-state in mind keep within the boundaries of Pakistan indeed.



President Zia: 'Ayubisation'

introduce Islamic fundamentalism. He has kept the agrarian structure as feudal as it used to be during the time of Ayub. Even in postings and transfers, he has been careful not to disturb the life of civil servants. He constantly caters to the middle class values of Pakistan as well as to the conservative sentiments of the vast majority of its people.

Moreover, he has kept the military satisfied by winking at corruption at every level, and by permitting middle-ranking and senior military officers to usurp thousands of civilian positions in the government. He has allowed the urban-rural rich to indulge in their preferred life-style. One of his most conspicuous political successes is the "self-censorship" to which he has succeeded to bend the Pakistani press. "Self-censorship" implies a kind of acquiescence of the Fourth Estate in military rule. When newspapers censor themselves, they keep within the limits of "freedom" granted by the regime. To judge by Pakistani journalism, Zia has granted the press very little freedom indeed.

ZIA-UL-HAQ'S strongest card is the visible improvement that has occurred in the economy. For the fifth year running, Pakistan has had a surplus of foodgrains. In 1983 it is exporting 2.5 billion tonnes of grains, exactly the amount it imported in 1978. Its debt burden is bearable: \$11 billion government-to-government credit on an average interest of 4 per cent, repayable in 30 years with seven years of grace, and commercial borrowings of \$500 million. The average annual aid-flow is \$1.3 billion, while debt-servicing costs \$700 million a year. Pakistan has begun to export a small amount of capital. This year it asked the World Bank-sponsored aid consortium for \$1.3 billion in aid, received commitments of \$1.8 billion! Pakistan is now seeking from the consortium long-term aid commitments, instead of annual ones. This will be discussed by the aid-giving countries in December by which time Pakistan's Sixth Five-Year Plan will be finalised.

The plan document released in early June after its approval by the National Economic Council, assumes continued self-sufficiency in foodgrains, stepped-up industrial production, low-level inflation, 8 per cent increase in exports and 3 per cent increase in imports each year in real terms—a steady decline in foreign aid, and substantial resource mobilisation within Pakistan. The plan's central theme is "improvement in the quality of people's life". It reflects the economic philosophy of Dighi Haq, 59, who returned to Pakistan last year after a 12-year absence—a return to the World Bank as the blue-eyed boy of Robert McNamara, and who is strongly committed to McNamara's perspectives on developing societies. Haq travelled widely in the provinces to consult public opinion, and then wrote a document that prescribes unabashed capitalist development on a feudal agrarian infrastructure that, pointed out in an interview, had not changed since the time of Ayub Khan.

**Plan Document:** Mehbubul Haq is not daunted by the inherent contradictions between a feudal agrarian system and capitalist mode of development. He doesn't believe that social justice can be developed only out of a public sector. In any case, Pakistan's experience with public sector projects has been poor and disappointing, and "so-called public concern must be built by mobilising the energies of private enterprise". Mehbabul Haq conceded that the plan document did not aim at too rapid structural change, but sought to build on the positive trends in the economy and on factors that have favoured Pakistan. The most conspicuous among these factors is the remittances of Pakis-

tans working abroad—\$3 billion and more each year. Remittances have been increasing in recent months at the rate of 30 per cent because people are sending home more money as job prospects in the Gulf region diminish.

Mehbabul Haq's plan document seeks to make use of the money flowing into hundreds of thousands of rural Pakistani families to change the face of the countryside in a decade of development. Said he: "Politically suppressed and economically depressed people have now found economic freedom. The first glamour of luxury goods has now passed, and people are now eager to invest in productive enterprises." Twenty per cent of the remittances have been invested in the last five years; "our target is 50 per cent". Illustrating how people have begun to convert income into permanent assets, Mehbabul Haq said: "We electrified 900 villages last year with one-third of the funds supplied by villagers. Villagers are now coming out with proposals that if the Government provides services like roads, electricity, transport and so on, they are willing to put their money to productive enterprise."

**Radical Changes:** Mehbabul Haq gave an outline of social change in rural Pakistan that is hardly known in India. The agrarian structure remains unchanged, but feudalism is gradually breaking down. The old generation finds living in the villages intolerable because the cultural milieu has changed. They are migrating to the towns and cities in large numbers. A new generation of younger people has come up in the villages "armed with money and hope". Tribal people, once condemned to seemingly endless poverty, are now getting too much money—two million tribals in the north-west get Rs 250 crore a year in remittances!

The result has been a radical change in army recruitment. In the past, the adventure-loving tribals used to join the army in large numbers; they spearheaded Pakistani military adventures in Kashmir both in 1948 and 1965. The seven million people of NWFP now receive Rs 750 crore from the Gulf region each year. The Pathan youth no longer line up at military recruitment centres. The social composition of the Pakistani Army has been changing fast. It is no longer an army of Punjabi villagers and adventure-mad frontiersmen.

"The plan is of course based on politics," observed Mehbabul Haq. It is part of the politics of Zia-ul-Haq to bring about a substantial transfer of services to the villages. For many years the rural folk have been deprived of their legitimate share of the good things of life. Seventy per cent of the people of Pakistan live in the villages. They have only 6 per cent of electricity produced in the country. Literacy stands at the shameful figure of 15 per cent. Only 6 per cent of Pakistan's doctors serve in the villages. The rural poor get only 18 per cent of all credits available to Pakistanis.

Mehbabul Haq wants to bring about radical change. The plan offers a "compulsory rural medical service" by making it obligatory for 25 per cent of doctors to serve in villages. He wants to raise literacy to 40 per cent in five years, and credit for the rural poor to 50 per cent of total credit funds. The rural poor in Pakistan is very different from the rural poor in India. The average holding of small farmers is 12.5 acres!

"You liberate people when you put services at their disposal," remarked Mehbabul Haq. But the crucial question remains. Can a military regime afford to "liberate" its people? How would an economic upsurge in the villages rebound on the dictatorship? Not many Pakistanis ask such questions. An authoritarian system needs a non-questioning society.

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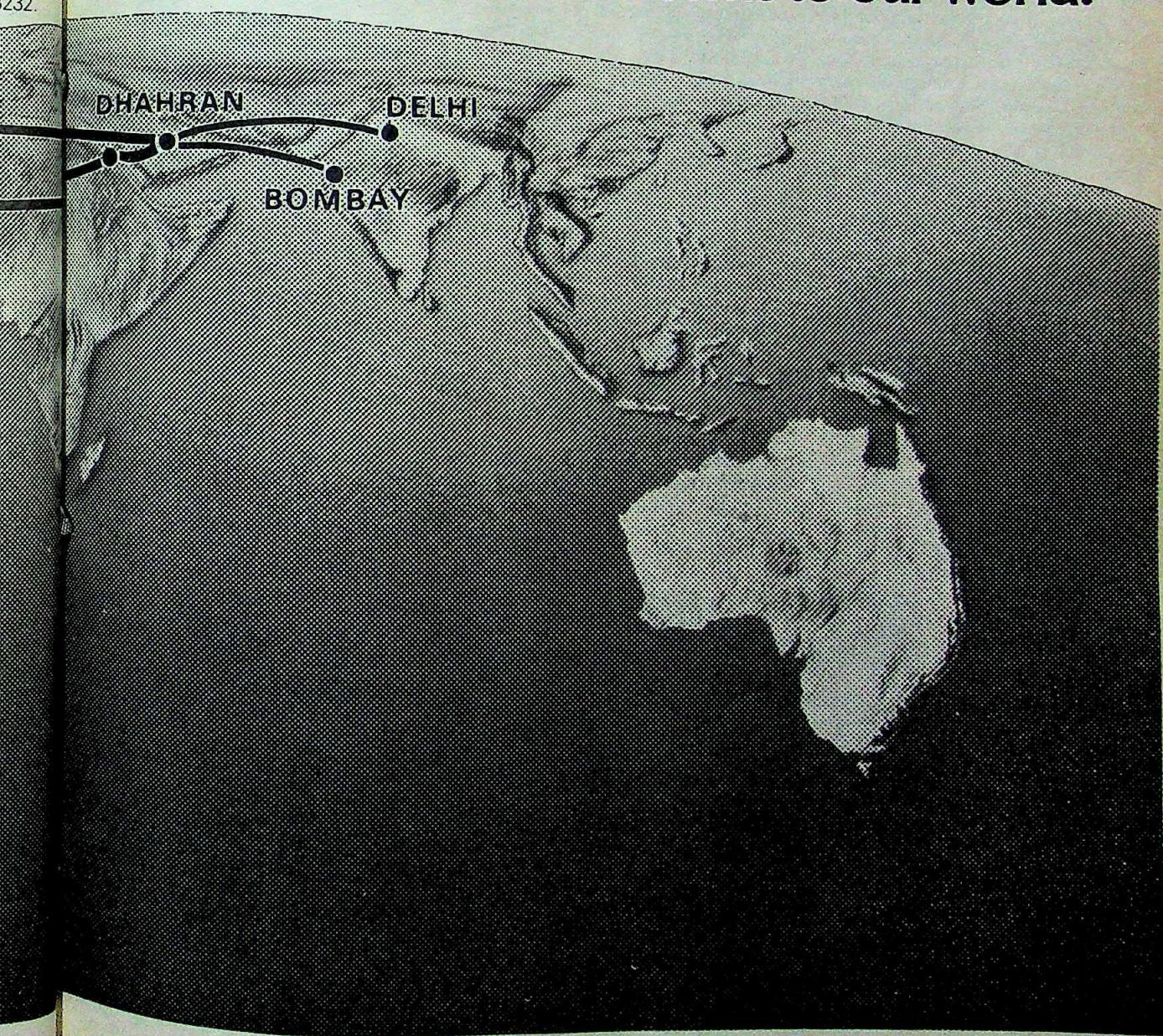
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TAMIL NADU

# Vested Interests

THE TOWN of Tiruppur in Coimbatore district of Tamil Nadu is to hosiery what Sivakasi is to fireworks, accounting for half of all cotton hosiery produced in the country. Tiruppur's 1,200-odd hosiery units, with an annual turnover of Rs 90 crore and export turnover of Rs 28 crore, are the main source of livelihood for the 2 lakh population. Unfortunately, Tiruppur shares another characteristic with Sivakasi—one-third of the approximately 30,000 hosiery workers are children, nearly 8,000 being under 14. For going school and play, they work a gruelling nine-hour day in unhygienic conditions, to earn the pittance of Rs 3 or Rs 4 a day, well below the statutory minimum wage. In addition, factory owners flout with impunity the Factories Act, 1948, which explicitly forbids employing children below 14. For the children of Tiruppur, the law is not only an ass, it is deaf and blind.

Latha, 12, is representative of Tiruppur's working children. Every morning, she walks to the Happybee Knitting Company, a major exporter, where "I check the vests for damages, lend a hand to the tailors and generally help about the factory". On an average, she says, she makes Rs 3 to Rs 4 a day. Asked about school, the girl blinks in surprise and explains: "School! I have studied up to class five, after which I was forced to work for a living to add to the family income. My father, brother and sisters all work for hosiery factories, each for a pittance. It is only with the combined income that we are able to make ends meet, and even then barely."

**Meagre Wages:** For eight-year-old Nagalakshmi, who is Latha's co-worker at Happybee, the day begins with a cup of coffee, a hasty bath, and a 2 km walk to work, tiffin box in hand, along with, father, brothers and sisters. She is the odd-job girl at the factory. "Wages?" asks Nagalakshmi. "I am on training now and don't get any money. Only after completion of six months of apprenticeship will I qualify for a daily pittance." Gauri, 9, a helper in the garment-making unit of the Fancy Knitting Works is more fortunate. She earns Rs 3.50 a day; as she puts it, "an extra Rs 75 a month goes a long way in supplementing our family income".

The work ethos of Tiruppur is such that seats

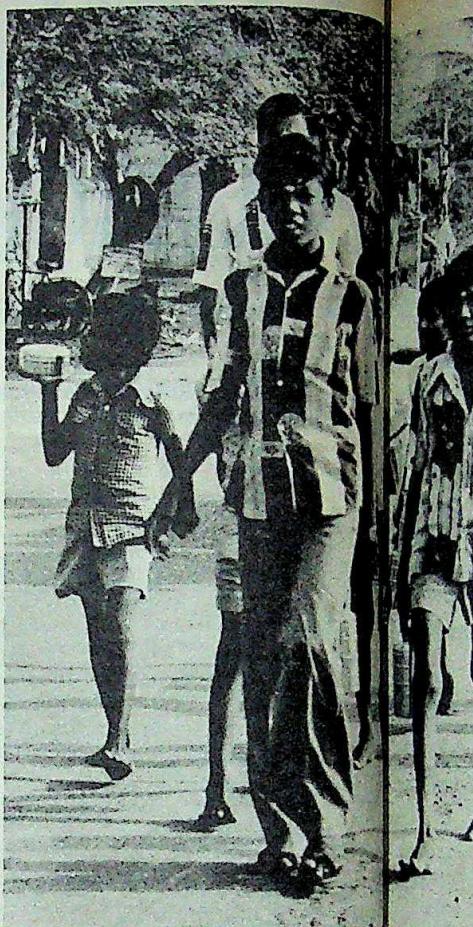
are going abegging in the 30-odd elementary schools. At the most, a child makes it to class four or five, and then starts work in a factory. There is no unemployment problem: at every other street corner are hung placards calling for hands to stitch vests or to check for damage. Sugesan, 10, started work as a helper in the Geetanjali Knitting Works during the summer vacation. "I won't go back to school after the vacation," he says confidently. "I like working in this factory, and I am going to continue working here." Most children are conscious of their importance as wage-earners. Poppy, 8, works in the garment-making unit of Reception International and complains about her "beggarly wages of Rs 2 a day. My father, brother and sister all work to support the family".

Family planning is unheard of in Tiruppur. With even children adding to the income—the average family income is Rs 1,000 a month—the population of the town has more than trebled in two decades. Tiruppur shares its domestic and export market with the other great centre of cotton hosiery in India—Calcutta. However, Tiruppur's hosiery is 2 to 3 per cent cheaper than Calcutta's. Reveals Dr T.V. Ratnam, director of the South India Textile Research Association, Coimbatore: "Labour is only 10 per cent of the total production cost in the hosiery industry. But the employment of child labour gives Tiruppur an edge over Calcutta in terms of costs."

**Important Input:** Factories Act or no Factories Act, child labour is so much a part of Tiruppur that the factory owners do not even try to deny using children. "Child labour may be illegal, but what can we do?" asked Mohan P. Kandaswamy, president of



Gauri of Fancy Knitting Works: making ends meet



Tiruppur children on the way

the South India Hosiery Manufacturers Association (SIHMA). "From the drought villages surrounding Tiruppur, children continuously flock to the town, literally

giving rise to a lot of child labour. And we are also in dire need of

N. Duraiswamy, partner in Fancy Knitting Works, admits: "The children are really dexterous and our factories cannot function without them. The industry will collapse without children." Discloses P. Jivi, proprietor of C.K. Knitting Company: "Of the workers in my small factory, three are children." says Tuber Nurugaswamy pointing to the importance of child labour in Tiruppur by speaking for that "children are the breath of the garment units".

For the children themselves, however, work is para'sle figure units is not at all healthy. 1983 shows Muthusamy, treasurer



Tiruppur children on the way to their factories (left) and hard at work: a gruelling nine-hour day in unhygienic conditions

Banian Factory Workers' Union, affiliated to the All India Trade Union Congress, paints a bleak picture: "Factory premises are hardly cleaned, with the result that there is a lot of cotton dust floating in the air, giving rise to respiratory problems, particularly in the children." The District Tuberculosis Centre attached to the District Medical Hospital in Tiruppur used to attend to 10 new cases of children every day last year. This year the figure has risen by 50 per cent; 15 new cases of C.K. child patients come to the centre for consultation and treatment every day now," says Tuberculosis Officer Dr E. Doraisamy.

In fact, the figures speak for themselves. The total number of tuberculosis cases treated in February 1981, both old and new patients, was 200. The comparable figure for February 1983 shows a seven-fold increase at 1,542. Because of

this alarming increase in the incidence of tuberculosis, the Tamil Nadu Government has sanctioned a 50-bed hospital for the town.

The authorities, however, appear to be turning a blind eye to the child labour in Tiruppur. A. Dharmalingam, assistant inspector of factories, Tiruppur, says: "Of the 2,000 prosecutions launched so far by the Inspectorate of Factories against hosiery factories in Tiruppur, only seven relate to the exploitation of child labour."

**Loopholes:** As for the Factories Act, the authorities plead that the units make full use of the loophole that factories which do not use power come within its purview only if they employ 20 or more workers; factories using power come within the act's purview if they employ 10 or more workers. Explains N.S. Thirugnanam, joint chief inspector of factories, Coimba-

tore: "Even when a unit has a labour force of more than 20, it is split into a number of factories to ensure that the number of workers in any individual factory is less than 20. Most hosiery units in Tiruppur do not use power."

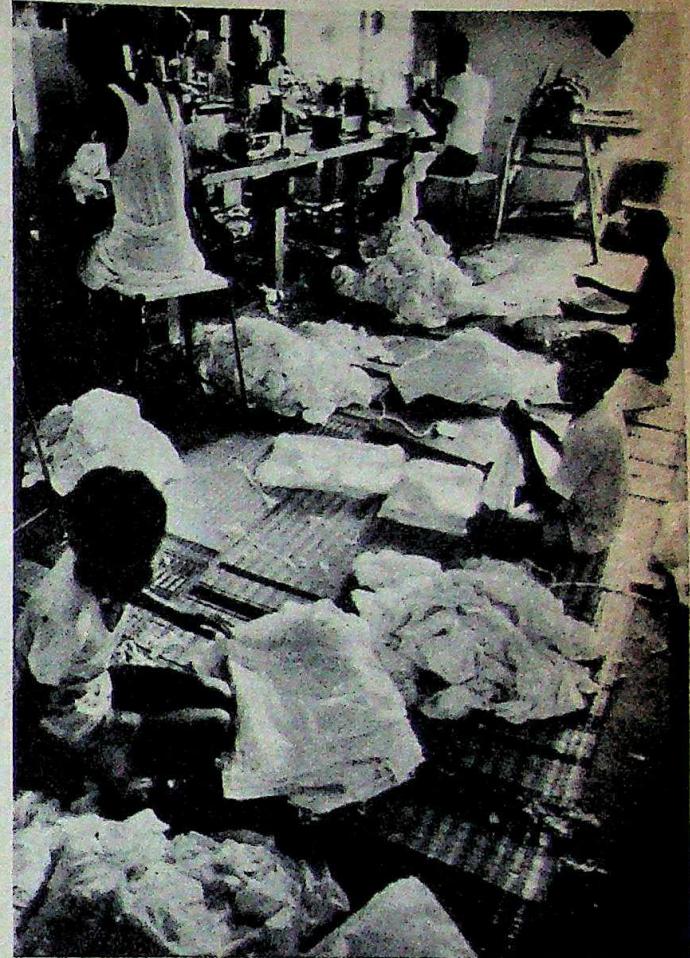
This argument, however, does not wash. With 30,000 workers in 1,200 factories, the average work-force of a factory in Tiruppur is 25. As hardly any factory has more than 50 workers, it is obvious that a large number of hosiery units must be culpable. Even if the hosiery units manage to get round the Factories Act, the Tamil Nadu Government has the powers, under the act, to have them declared factories. However, the state Government apparently prefers to keep its hands off the industry.

As things stand, therefore, the children of Tiruppur will continue to get up early every morning, down a meagre breakfast and go to work in polluted air that plays havoc with their lungs. Ill-paid and taken for granted, they are victims of a conspiracy that prefers to pay a horrendous price in exploiting young minds and bodies for the lucre of enterprise.

—S.H. VENKATRAMANI



A young tailor: rules flouted



BIHAR

# Crusade For Justice

**T**WO MONTHS ago, Gopalganj District Magistrate M.P.N. Sharma was murdered in broad daylight on the stairs of his collectorate by a bomb. Last fortnight, the crime branch of the Bihar Police submitted its charge-sheet, which accused a self-styled 31-year-old godman, Lord Krishna Sant Gyaneshwar, and six others of conspiring to kill Sharma. The godman's fanatic disciple, Pramahans Choudhary, was accused of actually tossing the bomb that killed the district magistrate—he had been arrested on the spot on April 11.

Despite the Government's obvious zeal—Chief Minister Jagannath, who requested the Patna High Court to set up a special court for the case, said he was "determined that justice will be done quickly"—Sharma's widow, Swarnlata Sharma, is not satisfied. Referring to the special court and the fact that a special CID team headed by Deputy Inspector General of Police K.D. Dubey completed the investigation in 50 days, Swarnlata terms them an "eyewash". Says she bitterly: "I am pained to find that a number of important people who seemed to be a party to the killing of my husband have not been touched. Though I had a lot of information about the circumstances leading to the killing, nobody bothered to talk to me, to record my statement. What kind of an investigation is this and why did the CID ignore me?"

**Murder Conspiracy:** Swarnlata alleges that there was a conspiracy to get rid of her husband, who she says "was crucified all through his career for his honesty". Sharma had come into conflict with Sant Gyaneshwar when the godman was flushed out of his six-acre Amarapuri Ashram in village Bhagwat Parsa by a police party, which recovered a large number of bombs and firearms and 26 young women from what was called the ashram's "sex-den". The godman and his disciples were jailed, charged with killing Hadisan—a widow who had accused the Sant of grabbing her land—and under the Crime Control Act.

It was in jail that the murder was planned according to the CID team: the godman held regular consultations with his disciples and had done so on the morning of the fatal day. The investigation did not establish the jail authorities' involvement in the conspiracy but, asserts Swarnlata: "The jailor was certainly aware of this. He allowed Sant's chelas to come and go freely and hatch the



(From top)  
victim Sharma,  
widow Swarnlata  
and accused Sant  
Gyaneshwar:  
convoluted  
case



conspiracy." The investigators, on their part, said that the lower level staff had allowed unauthorised meetings—not uncommon in Bihar—but no higher-ups were involved.

Sharma's widow asks other questions. Says she: "Every day some senior officers and his private secretary used to see my husband off whenever he left the office but that day all were conspicuous by their absence. Why was he allowed to come out of his chamber alone without any security and escort? Why did nobody detect the killer who was waiting at the staircase for hours

with bags containing bombs?" She adds that the local MLA, Kali Pandey, until recently in the Congress(I), had repeatedly demanded Sharma's transfer; Pandey was arrested recently. She said that Pandey and the Sant had come closer when both were in Muzaffarpur jail.

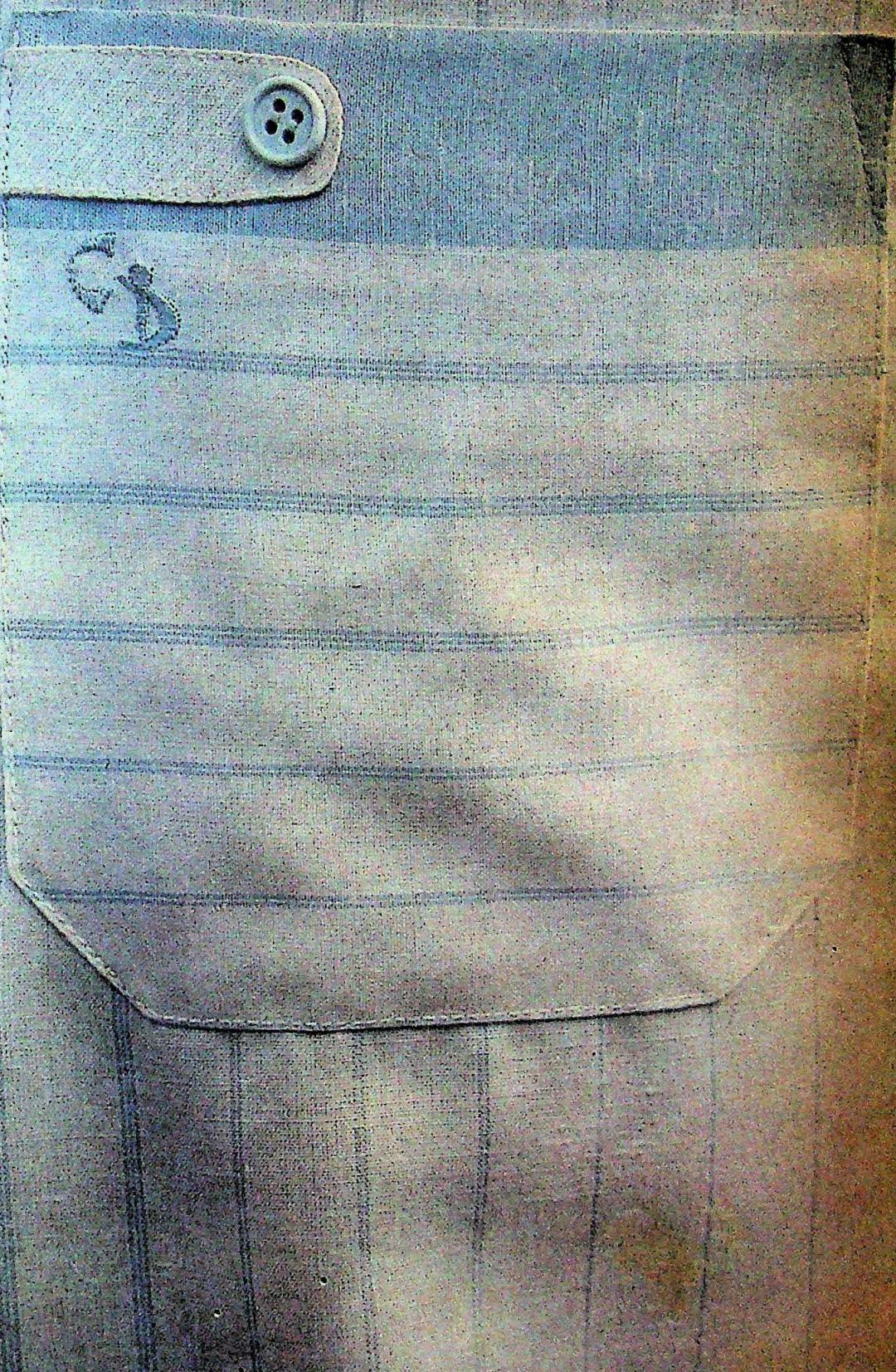
**Colourful Figure:** The others mentioned in the charge-sheet are Sadiq Mian, Saidin Sain, Hare Ram Choudhary, Sant Ram alias Sant Das and Ramji Prasad Verma. Sadiq was already in jail with Sant Gyaneshwar and Sairuddin, Sadiq's younger brother, who allegedly supplied the killer bomb, was tracked down later. Of all these, Gyaneshwar is the most colourful figure. His real name is Sadanand Tripathy, and he comes from a poor family of Deoria district, Uttar Pradesh. He is a law graduate who was attracted by the "sex-therapy" doctrines of another godman and, one day, declared himself an incarnation of God promising gladness of the Almighty in just seven days; people surrendered themselves to him completely.

Thus began a career of intimidation. Says a CID officer: "Once a person surrendered himself before the Sant he would never let him go." In Deoria, an official who tried to free his wife from his clutches was murdered. Ishwardeo Mishra, editor of the Hindi daily *Janavarta* of Varanasi, was attacked after his paper exposed the godman's activities. Finally, the Sant landed up in Gopalganj and his ashram soon attracted young women. Allegedly, he also started grabbing land, and villagers who protested against this and other activities were terrorised. The Sant was arrested in November 1980 but got bail. In the end, Sharma ordered the police to move in nine months ago.

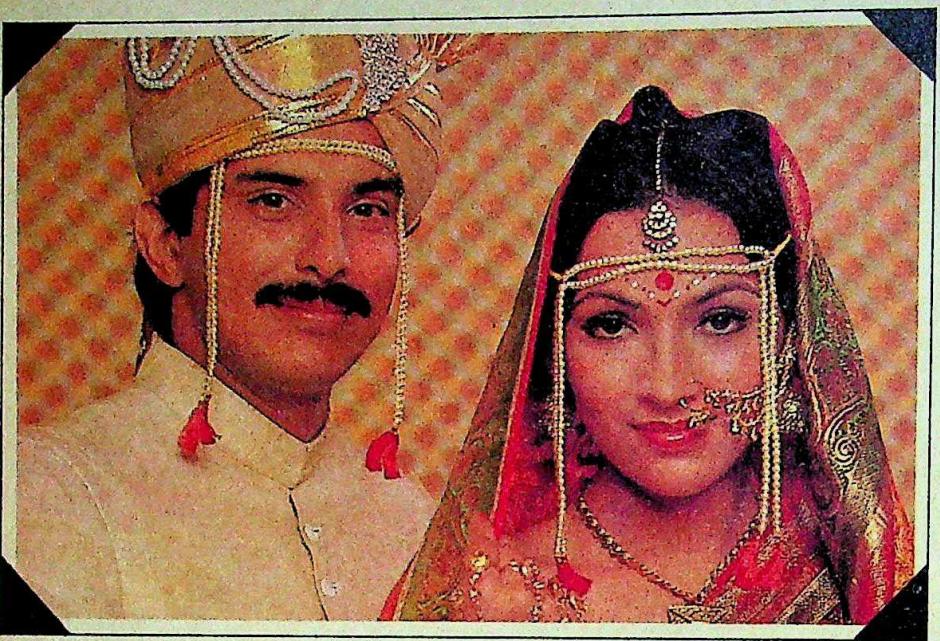
Swarnlata charges that there was political pressure on her husband to desist from his crusade, pressure which, according to her, came from the chief minister as well. Jagannath denies this. Swarnlata admits that the Government has sent her the Rs 2 lakh cheque, promised as compensation, added that the salary of her husband until retirement, also promised, was yet to arrive. She says that she is still to be allotted a room in the Patna Circuit House, is still to get a phone, and her daughter, who studies in Delhi, is still to receive the promised Rs 300-a-month scholarship. Said Swarnlata: "This is the price of honesty and sincerity."

The aggrieved widow finishes with harsh words for the state Government: "A Government which swears in the name of justice but survives on the blessings of fake-called 'gods' is the real murderer of my husband. Can you expect justice from it?" though the Government has moved with alacrity in this case, it obviously needs to do more.

—FARZAND AHMED



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S.M.I. ASEER

# "People Misunderstand Me"

SINCE he took over as president of the Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee(I) (MPCC-I) two months ago, S.M.I. Aseer has had a stormy innings. The former English professor from Ahmednagar has gained a reputation bigger than Babasaheb Bhosale's for putting his foot into his mouth.

It started with Aseer asserting that he had been made party president because he was a Muslim. Then he backtracked to say what he meant was that he is a member of the minority community. Questioned on the ethics of continuing as minister after taking over the party office, Aseer with disarming honesty said he needed a ministerial bungalow. The executive of the MPCC(I) which Aseer had earlier hoped would be formed soon has now been postponed till at least after the Sangli elections.

In the situation, Aseer is in no position to control his flock. Chief Minister Vasantdada Patil and Deputy Chief Minister Ramrao Adik eye each other with open suspicion while former chief minister Bhosale goes on about his third force and N.R. Tirpude takes occasional public snipes at the state Government. A conference this month of state Congress(I) party workers began in confusion as workers insisted on interrupting the speeches; and last fortnight AICC(I) General Secretary G.K. Moopanar appointed an inquiry into the disturbances.

Aseer's latest controversy is about his shoemania. The evening newspaper Mid-Day published a photograph of Aseer's shoe rack with 23 pairs. Annoyed, Aseer remarked at Patoda in Beed district that journalists had stooped so low and had no better work than counting his shoes. If he was fond of good sing, that was no crime—so was Pandit Nehru. The Pune Union of Journalists (PUJ) immediately passed a resolution condemning Aseer for his "undemocratic attack on the press" and threatened to stop covering his meetings.

In an interview with Principal Correspondent COOMI KAPOOR, Aseer explained his point of view. Excerpts:

Q. How do you find time to be a minister with four portfolios, labour, transport, jails and Waqf, and also be president of the MPCC(I)?

A. I have no time but unless the Centre tells me to leave my ministership I will continue. I am suffering physically. I sleep after midnight.

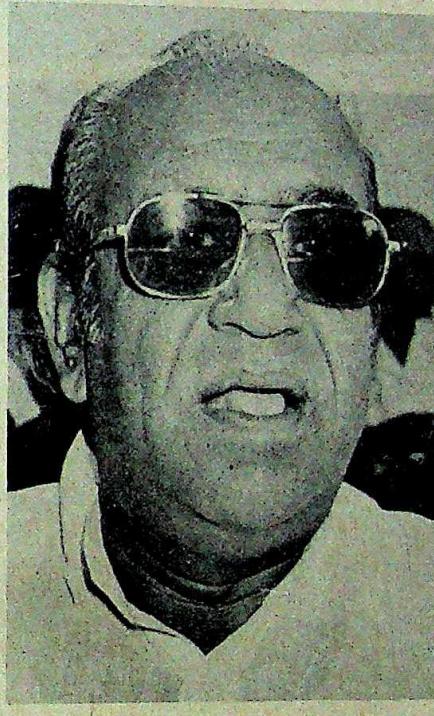
Q. Of course there are some advantages to retaining a ministership....

A. Yes, when I go to a place many people flock to see me because I am a minister. Before no one bothered. So it helps

my job as state unit president to be also a minister.

Q. Party indiscipline seems to be on the increase as witnessed during your recent workers' convention.

A. We are not a cadre-based party but a common man's party; so you cannot expect much discipline. In fact, the discipline at the convention was better than expected. It was



*"At present I am a captain without a team and I have to play the match. I am a lonely man. There are vested interests and someone has to decide. Delhi will be the referee."*

not a literary conference that everyone should have remained silent.

Q. Your party members continue making statements against each other in public. Tirpude has criticised the handling of the textile strike.

A. At present I am a captain without a team and I have to play the match. I am a lonely man. As soon as my executive is formed, I will do something. As for the textile strike, what is to be done of the two lakh mill workers? Sixty-five per cent have returned to work. The remaining can never go back because there are 18 or 19 sick mills.

Q. Why this continued delay in forming the MPCC(I) executive?

A. Because people have different interests. There are vested interests and someone has to decide.

Q. You mean Delhi will have to act as a referee in the discussions?

A. Yes, Delhi will be the referee.

Q. Isn't it true that Maharashtra is being ruled from Delhi?

A. No, no!

Q. Are you planning to take disciplinary action against any party members for speaking out of turn?

A. No disciplinary action at the moment. First let me get my executive body. Maybe later I will issue warnings.

Q. What about the shoe controversy and the PUJ resolution condemning your remarks against that press?

A. I don't bother about the PUJ. These Marathi newspapermen misunderstood what I said. I did not attack all newsmen. I spoke about the particular newsman—that he had nothing better to do than stoop so low as to count my shoes. While I was having my bath? I take an hour for my bath.

Q. Do you really have such a large wardrobe?

A. Yes, not just shoes but also pants, shirts and suits. Years back, in Ahmednagar, they used to imitate my clothes and my hair cut which was known as the Aseer cut.

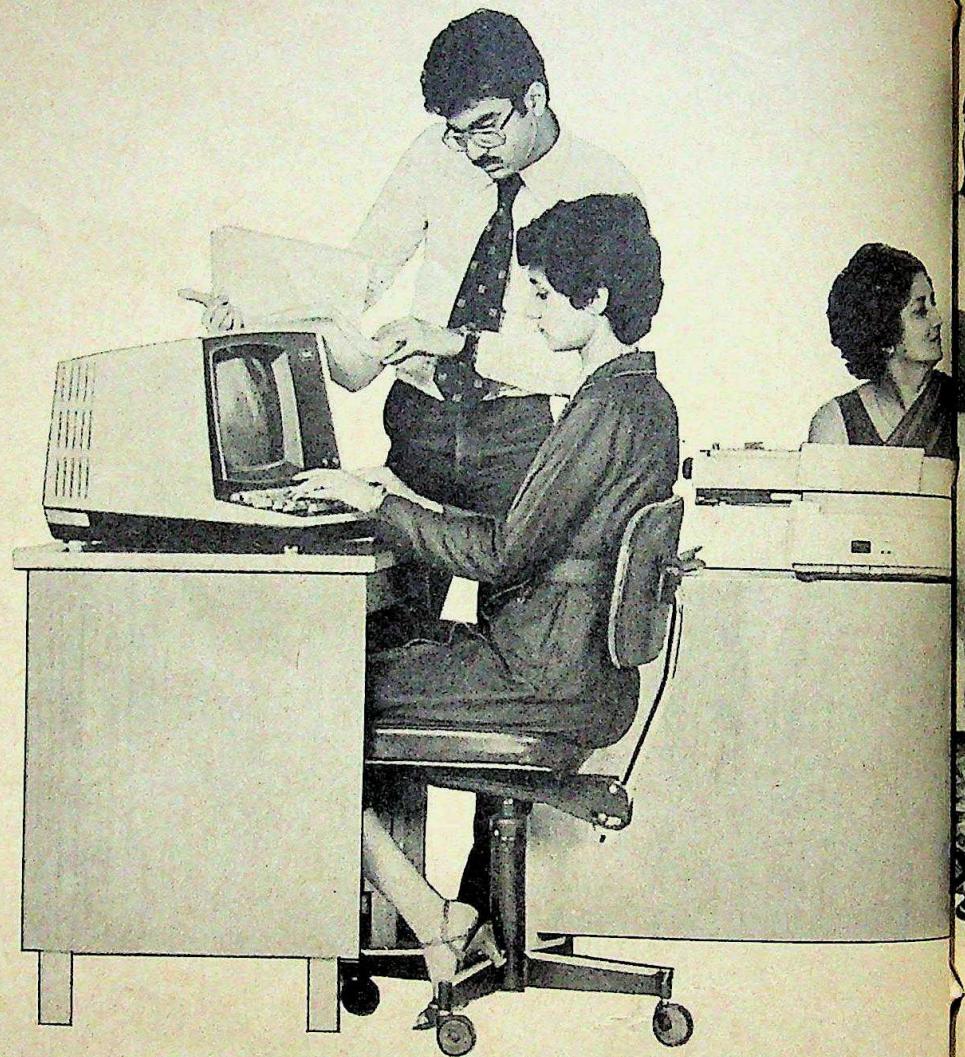
Q. What was the Aseer cut?

A. Long hair till the neck. People used to ask their tailor to stitch an Aseer pant. The Aseer pant was a very tight pant with cross-bone pockets. The Aseer shirt was a very tight shirt.

Q. But now you have given up the Aseer pant and shirt?

A. Yes, now I mostly wear kurta pyjama. I have 50 kurta pyjamas, 50 shirts and 25 safari suits. Good clothes and good food have been my hobby. But people misunderstand me. I can understand the press complaining if I have such habits only after becoming minister. But before becoming a minister, I used to take more trouble with my clothes. I used to change my dress three times as an MLA; now I change only once.

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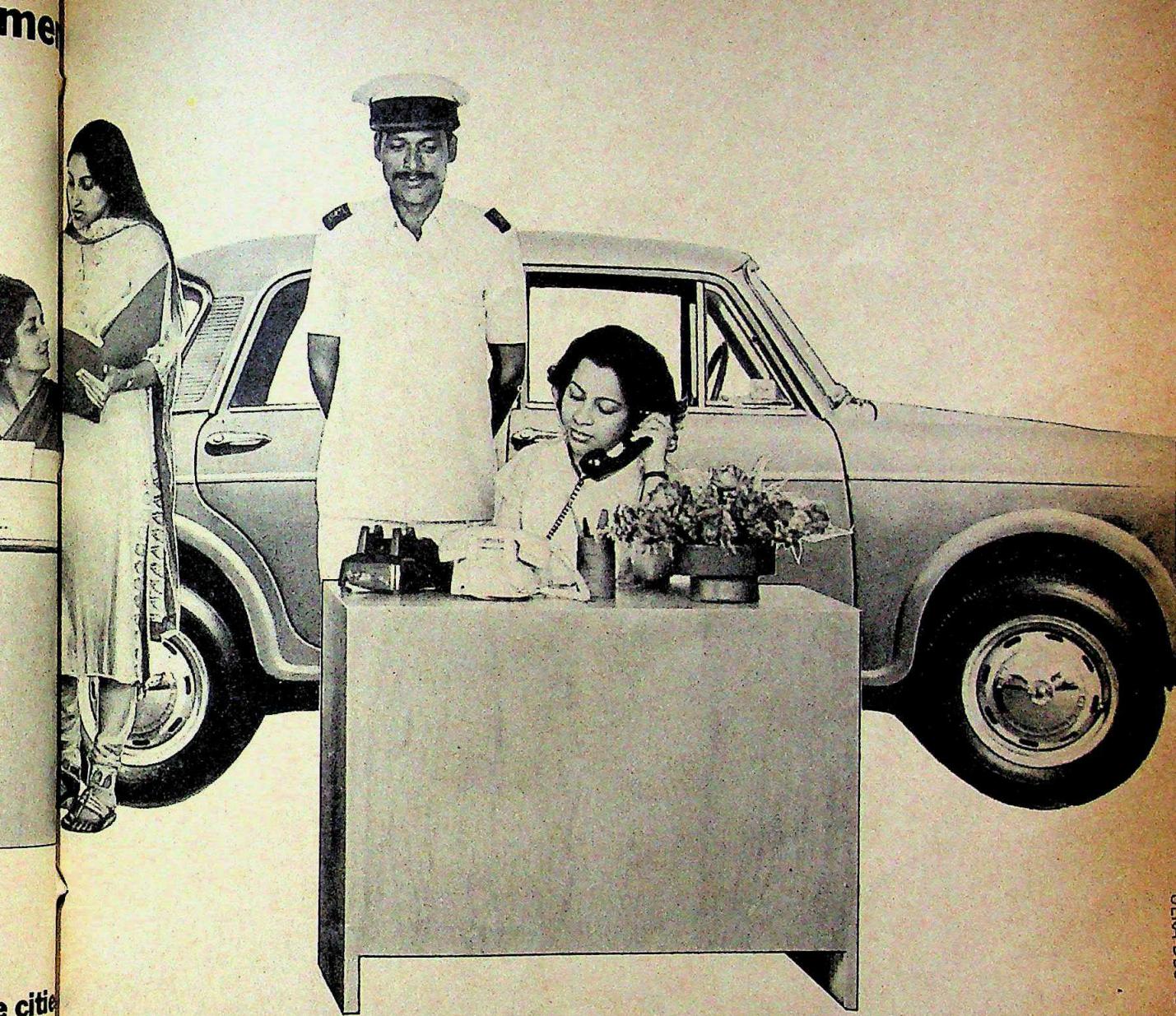
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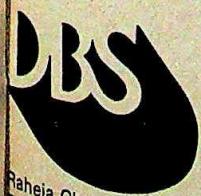
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## MEDIA

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DOORDARSHAN

# Faux Pas

EVEN those inured to detecting howlers on television—missed cues, yawning gaps, dropped microphones—must have been surprised by this one. Soon after what was considered to be prime time telecast of Mrs Gandhi's European tour, viewers were treated to the same song twice within a couple of minutes. And, at 9.44 p.m. the caption highlighting the next day's programme misspelt the word "prime" in prime minister. Considering this to be a national embarrassment, over-zealous officials at the Directorate of Doordarshan promptly suspended programme producer S.V. Kaul, programme executive S.V. Sharma and programme assistant Kali Prasad.

Not to be outdone, the Joint Forum of Doordarshan employees (representing about 15 unions) struck back and threatened to suspend transmission the next day if their colleagues were not reinstated within 24 hours. Thus, what from the outside appeared to be an innocuous gaffe became a major issue with the employees alleging victimisation while Doordarshan authorities called it disciplinary action. "This is obviously more than just disciplinary action because such slips have occurred in the past and they have gone unnoticed. Last year on the eve of Independence Day the caption read: 'President's Message to the Nation' and no one was punished for that—in fact, that had political overtones," said Kali Prasad. According to another suspended official, Lord Mountbatten has been repeatedly spelt as "Mountainbatten" and nothing was made of it. "Such slips are fairly routine and suspending three people suddenly and that too for negligence is a clear case of victimisation," Prasad said, "the graphics artist misspelt prime minister and we as producers are not supposed to be proof-readers."

**No Victimation:** "The matter was brought to my notice and I was also informed that three people have been suspended. I am also aware that such mistakes have occurred in the past but that is no reason to excuse them now," said H.K.L. Bhagat, information and broadcasting minister. "There is absolutely no question of victimisation," he said.

The suspensions, however, have opened up the proverbial can of worms. There were rumblings within Doordarshan ever since the Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA) was clamped during the Asiad. "ESMA has been extended because the authorities feared sabotage and at any given point there are plainclothesmen and intelligence officers on Doordarshan premises," Prasad said.

The Joint Forum had also been on the question of bonus for the employees. "The bonus issue has been under consideration and I am sympathetic to the demands but to bring it up now is to confuse matters," said Shailendra Shankar, director-general of Doordarshan. According to him, the officials were suspended primarily because of confusion with the songs, and not over spelling, as it was made out to be. "A tape was played twice which means that the final check which is carried out before a tape is scheduled was not done—if the tape had been checked, this fiasco would not have occurred," he added.



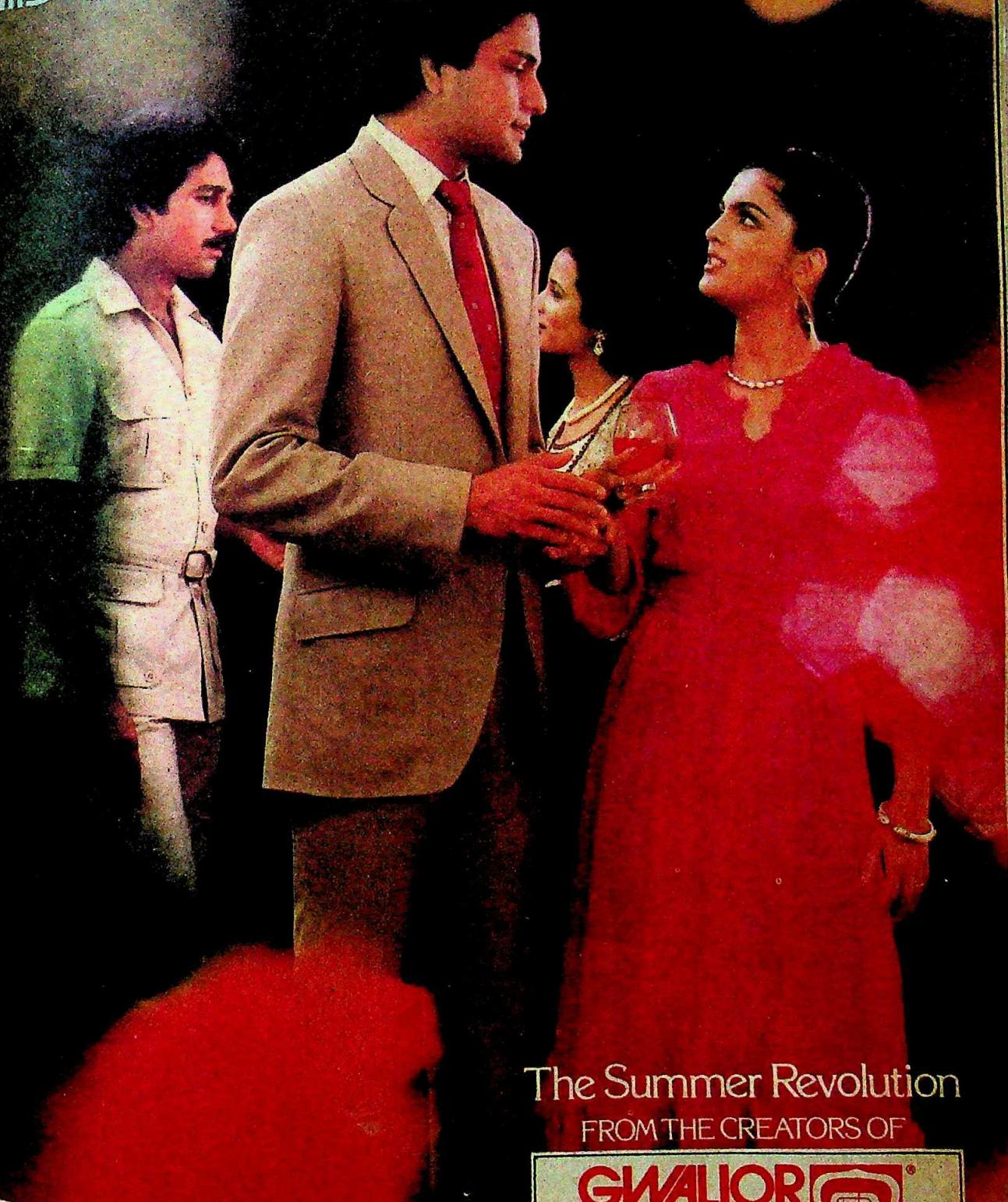
**Shortfall:** "It is sheer nonsense to say that a producer checks the tapes completely before scheduling them. That is done with the Yogabhyas programme because Dhirendra Brahmachari was a VVIP—what typically happens is that we spot check a tape to make sure it contains what the law says," said one of the suspended officials. Apparently, during the prime minister's tour, no one knew the duration of the feed in advance which meant that ready-made files of various durations had to be kept on hand. "That day we were informed at about 7 p.m. that the feed might fall short (as it did by 12 minutes) and we were ready with a tape which had the choral songs," the official said. Kali Prasad was not even on duty when the bungling occurred and his only contention was that he had picked the tape. Members of the Joint Forum allege that this is a clear case of victimisation because Prasad and Kaul are both active union members. Sharma has been roped in to make the whole thing look authentic and professional.

While authorities at the ministry and the Directorate of Doordarshan insist that the whole affair is a storm in a tea cup, others suggest otherwise. The suspensions may have been revoked, but Kaul reportedly resigned and is planning to take the matter to court while Sharma and Prasad fear that they will be transferred. If that does happen, Doordarshan will be missing much more than just cues.

—CHITRA SUBRAMANIAM

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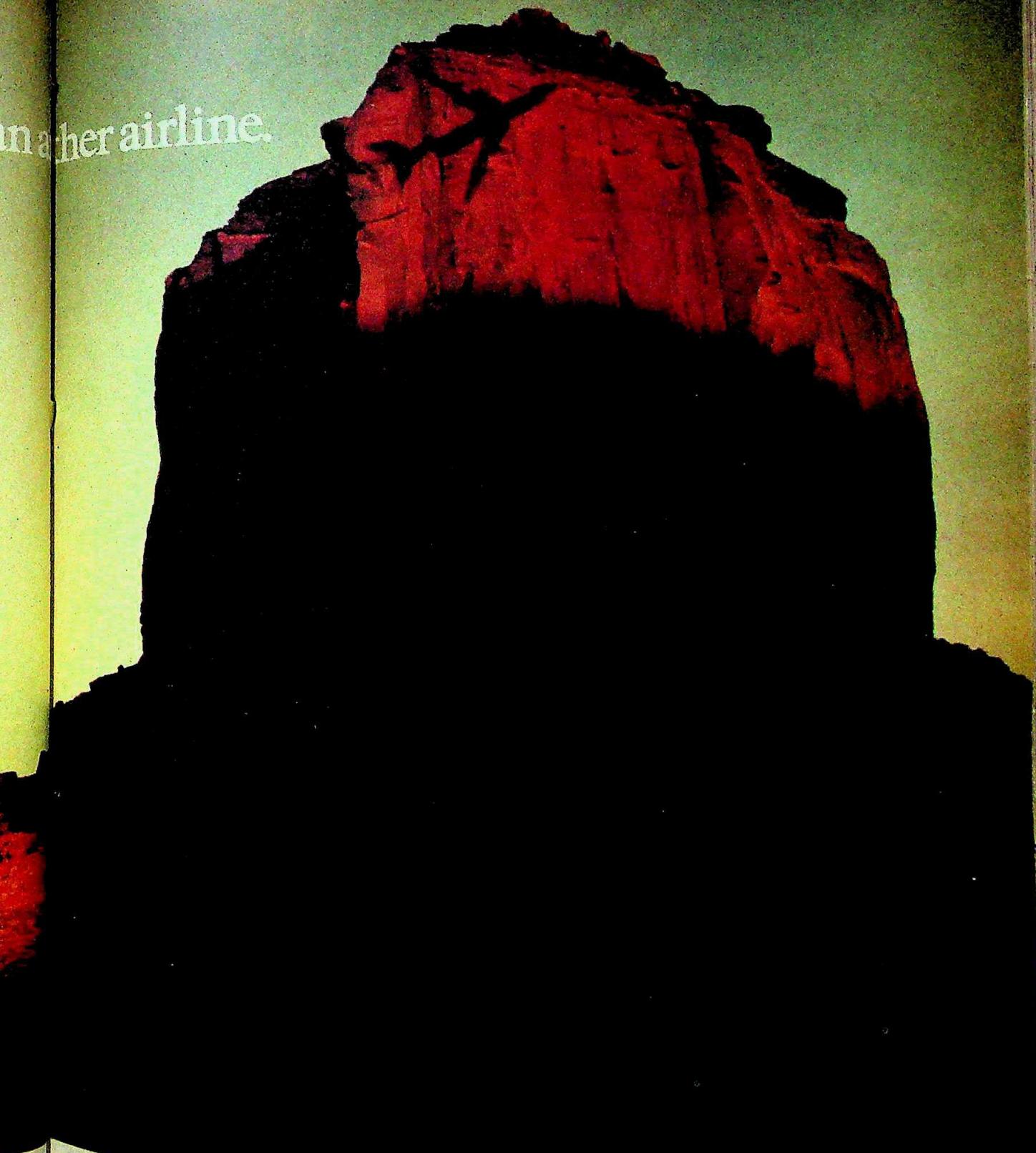
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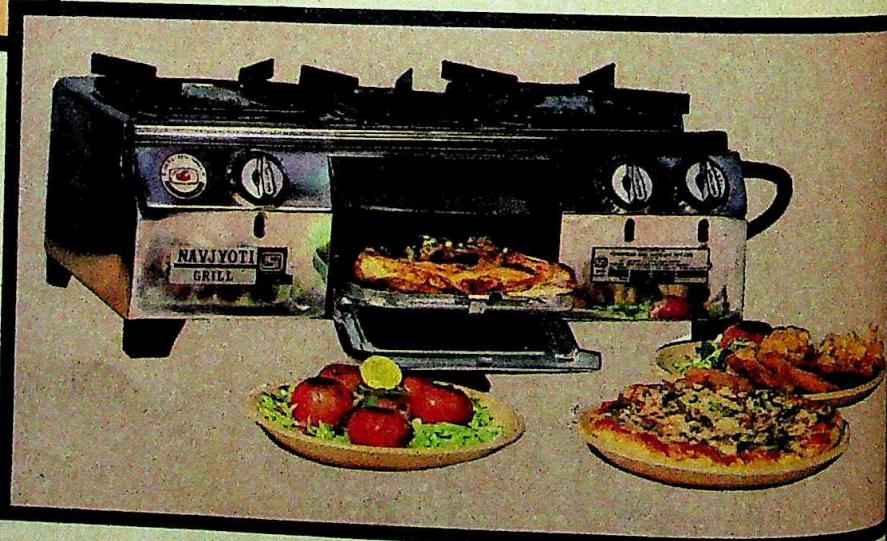
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GUJARAT

# Breathing Trouble

**F**OR THOUSANDS of suffering villagers in seven villages of Kaira district, Gujarat, the dream has soured. When the Associated Cement Company opened its factory in Sevaliya village 30 years ago, the villagers eagerly anticipated more jobs and a better life-style—instead, they fell victim to chronic respiratory diseases, and to make matters worse, agricultural production plummeted by a dismal 35 per cent. Caught between a callous government and indifferent company officials, they have been endlessly pleading for an arrest of the pollution, with little effect so far.

According to estimates made by the Tharsa taluk office, in whose jurisdiction the factory lies, nearly 1,400 farmers holding 621 hectares of land in the villages of Rustampura, Vaso, Malwan, and Angadi have been seriously affected with respiratory ailments. And against the gross yield—Rs 47 lakh—of all three crops (pulses, cotton and tobacco), the net loss suffered as a result of the pollution is over Rs 14 lakh. Taluk officials have written to the Government saying that the company must pay the farmers compensation worth 70 to 80 per cent of the loss.

But the cement company, which annually produces over two lakh tonnes of the commodity, is unperturbed. Although it has conducted no tests of its own to disprove the charges of pollution, the company's attitude is very cool: when asked if the compensation would be paid, an unflustered J.P. Jani, personnel manager, retorted: "The cement dust is not harmful to either agriculture or human beings. The question of granting compensation, therefore, does not arise." However, laboratory tests conducted at the instance of INDIA TODAY at Ahmedabad proved beyond doubt that the dust was harmful to both people and plants. Said Dr P.P. Oza, head, Environmental Engineering Laboratory, who tested it: "The dust, if regularly inhaled, will cause pneumoconiosis, a respiratory disease." Dr Rafi Patel of the Sevaliya Primary Health Centre, testified that many of his patients were suffering from pneumoconiosis. Said he: "Respiratory infections are very common among villagers, as they inhale the harmful dust. Complaints of chronic bronchitis, asthmatic bronchitis, allergic bronchitis, allergic skin diseases and chest pain have become frequent."

**Hazardous:** The analysis report also indicated that the dust contained 47 per cent lime and 24 per cent silica, and 4.3 per cent iron oxide. Such huge amounts are poisonous to both plants and human beings. Added Dr Oza: "Very fine particles of the dust enter through the nose, pass through the lungs and stick to the alveoli (air sacs which introduce oxygen into the blood). The dust

moisture from the atmosphere, hardening into a thin layer which restricts photosynthesis and gradually damages the plants. Plant physiologist Dr P.M. Mehta in a recent study concluded that tobacco grown in this area contained 45 per cent less chlorophyll than normal, which explained the scanty yield.

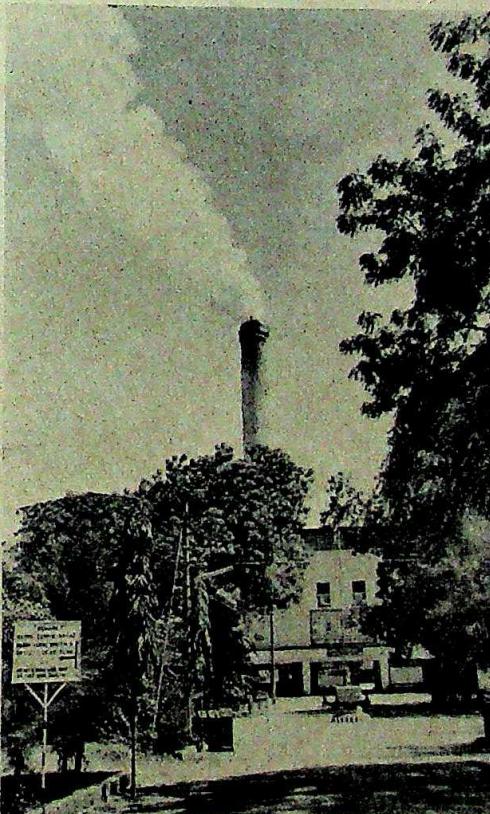
Tests conducted early this year at Malwan by Dr B.P. Swadas, a professor of environmental engineering, indicated that there were 5,300 micrograms of cement dust per cubic metre in the atmosphere—a dangerously high figure, as anything more than

300 micrograms per cubic metre is considered hazardous. The Government is aware of this fact, but its attitude is reflected in the words of Health Minister Manoharsinh Jadeja: "The cement dust pollution around Sevaliya is dangerous, but there is nothing I can do to stop it, due to lack of proper anti-pollution laws."

**Worsening Situation:** The situation has been worsening down the years. When the villagers' efforts to reason with the factory officials yielded no results, they turned to the Government for help. It was only when the villagers of Malwan decided, in 1980, not to pay land revenue that government officials sat up and took notice. They hastily promised succour, but after the villagers had paid up their taxes, the promise was conveniently forgotten. At this point, a feeling of apathy set in. Said Shivabhai Kalabhai, a labourer: "We have learnt to suffer silently." Added Raman Patel, a farmer: "The villagers are not united. Many of our families have people who work in the factory. They would not like to lose their jobs."

However, last fortnight, the villagers were trying to get organised once again. Said Mahendra Patel, one of the leaders: "We plan to gherao the factory and ensure that it stops production." With the protests gathering momentum, and anti-pollution laws finally being put on the anvil, the company announced that within the next two years it would set up an electro-static precipitator to check wastage of limestone; the device would also limit the pollution. Even if their intentions fructify, it will be too late for the numerous villagers who have been stricken with chronic respiratory diseases, and who have had to watch their crops withering away in the fields. As the oldest woman of Malwan village, Chanda Patel, bitterly put it: "When we die, the cement company owners can sing our funeral songs."

—RAMESH MENON in Kaira



(Top, from left to right) Mahendra, Raman and Chanda and the cement factory: harmful dust

particles irritate the sensitive alveoli which then get inflated and burst."

It has a similar effect on plants as well. A thin film of dust coats all the leaves of plants and trees in the area—the film absorbs

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## KEC explodes a favourite myth in after-sales service



A large, cylindrical bomb is shown from a side-on perspective, angled upwards towards the top right. A lit fuse is visible at the top, with a bright, starburst-like explosion effect emanating from it. The bomb's surface has the text "Play safe and follow established practice" printed on it in a bold, sans-serif font.

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The circlips unfortunately did not resolve the problem. On the 19th, mark the date, AFDC urged us to supply a new motor immediately. AFDC was in a spot because in the last week of August '82, a team of Mitsui experts was flying down to give its final approval.

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On the 20th morning, he found out that the rotor had an axial play of about 10 to 12 microns. Immediately he replaced the non-drive-end shield and bearing.

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By the 23rd our man was back in our labs. The ball bearing supplied by an internationally reputed company was dimensionally faulty; statistically a one-in-a-million defect.

On the 7th of September, AFDC wrote to us. Quote: "We would like to record our appreciation and sincere thanks to Kirloskar Electric Company... for the extremely prompt action taken... The motor was functioning when our Japanese collaborator visited the plant for approval and certification... we assure you that for our expansion programme, we will use only Kirloskar Electric Motors."

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MAHARASHTRA

# The Exorcists

**I**T WAS a macabre scene reminiscent of medieval witchcraft. The setting was a Maharashtra village, Ambitghar, which is just 160 km from Bombay. As representatives of every family from Ambitghar waited outside the small zilla parishad schoolroom, panchayat leaders watched eight women and one man get exorcised of evil spirits. The women were branded on their foreheads and tongues with a hot iron rod, while one fainted after she was forced to stand on a red hot iron *tawa*. All villagers were coerced into signing a statement on stamped court paper saying that they would not complain to the police even if they were singled out for treatment.

After news of the ceremony leaked out last fortnight following the arrest of the sorcerer Pandurang Dingore known locally as *bhagat* and most of the panchayat members, the press went to town on the illiterate and ignorant villagers. But closer investigation suggests that this was a plot of some village leaders to get even with a rival group which earlier controlled the panchayat.

**Devious Plot:** This is the view shared by many neighbouring villages and the victims, some of whom live in dread of harsh reprisals for having reported the matter to the police. Ananta Krishna Bhoir, the only male victim, says that already the eight victimised families are being ostracised.

Dingore, who has now been released on bail, claims that he is innocent and was duped by the panchayat members out to settle scores with old enemies. Says he indignantly: "Murderers get away scot-free and the newspapers instead are making a hue and cry about nothing." Dingore asserts that he left Ambitghar on June 4 night and returned to his village some 30 km away after leaving the ingredients for the puja to appease the village goddess. He says it was the villagers themselves who identified the agents of the evil spirits and carried out the exorcism.

Dudaji Patil, assistant sarpanch, who was arrested and bailed out along with 19 others claims that the villagers decided to call in a *bhagat* after they realised that someone was practising black magic in Ambitghar. Four months back, a young boy died after a long illness and 12

hours before his death someone placed a doll with dough and a bowl with lemon and rice outside his room. Local apprehensions were strengthened by the mental illness of a village woman and the cattle not yielding much milk.

**Questionable Document:** The sarpanch attributes the delay in calling the *bhagat* to the time taken to raise the sorcerer's fee of Rs 1,000. This was the first time the *bhagat* visited the village. Usually the villagers went for medical treatment to nearby Wada. Dudaji fails to see how he is being blamed when the signed affidavits testify to a unanimous village decision. The torture victims and their families however argue that it was hardly a case of going along with the scheme willingly. They were all scared to refuse signing the affidavit brought by the patil in charge of law and order for fear that they would be immediately accused of being in league with the evil spirits. At the time of the torture they were warned that any protest would mean a fine of Rs 151.

This is a huge sum in a village where patils pay Adivasi casual labour around Rs 4 per day or 2 kg of rice as against the Maharashtra state Government's statutory minimum daily rate of Rs 7. Says Laxman Jag-

nath Rawat, the village schoolteacher who had refused to hand over the school building keys which were later taken forcibly from him: "Everyone knew what was happening but if we had complained, the panchayat members would have claimed we were making up with the evil spirits."

**Village Vendetta:** The method for determining who was possessed by the spirits was to take the *bhagat's* copper bowl filled with rice and lemon and see where it led. The *bhagat* apparently led the new panchayat group to the houses of the supporters of the old panchayat which had been in power for 10 years before being ousted two years back.

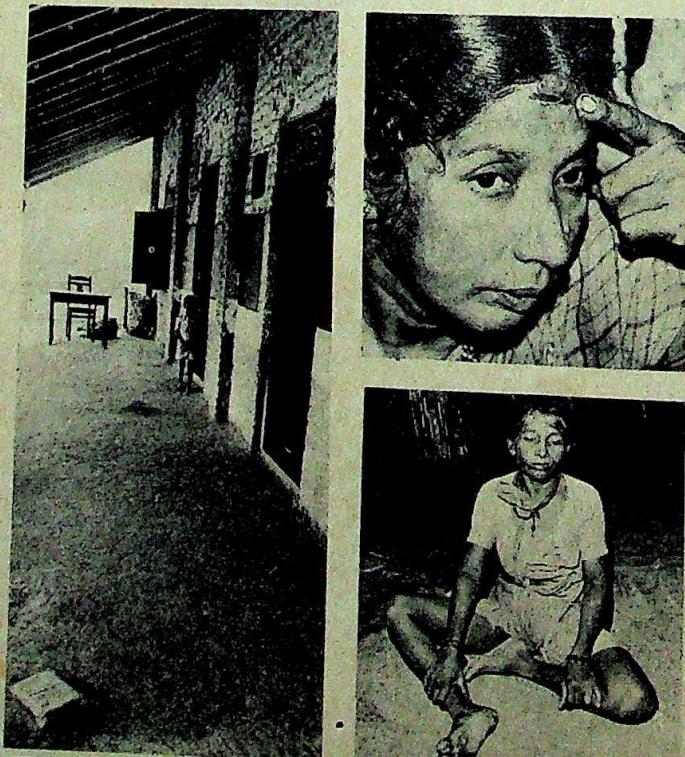
The mother of the old sarpanch Krishn Fakir Patil was called a witch though she was not touched physically. This is perhaps because her family members include a chemist, a lawyer and an engineer though they do not stay in the village. Other victims were the mother of the former assistant sarpanch Pandurang Mao Patil, Anasuya Shantana Jadhav, a member of the old panchayat, and two vocal supporters of the old panchayat — Ananta Krishna Bhoir and his wife Anni. While Bhoir merely had his *shendi* (tuft of hair) cut off, his wife can barely speak because of her branded tongue.

The worst torture was reserved for the only Adivasi victim, Parvatibai Wagh, who was put on a red-hot *tawa*. She fainted with the excruciating pain and had to be carried home by her husband. Parvati was hospitalised in Wada and she still cannot walk because of infected blisters on her feet.

**Belated Reaction:** It was only three days after the ceremony that Bhoir plucked up enough courage to report the case to the police and took Parvatibai along with him. The police swooped down the following day and arrested 20 persons, recovered the iron rods, stove and lemons which had been lying in the schoolroom.

Ever since the matter was reported to the police, the victims of the torture and their families live in terror. Says Jai Randha, a villager: "Nobody talks to the eight families. They are scared." Adds Subha Patil, a nephew of the old sarpanch: "Everyone knows that the whole scheme was just planned by a few people to get at the other side but nobody dares to talk." Though the physical wounds may heal with time, the psychological effect of the trauma will remain.

— COOMI KAPUR



The scene of 'exorcism' (left); Bhoir (top) and Parvati: diabolical plot

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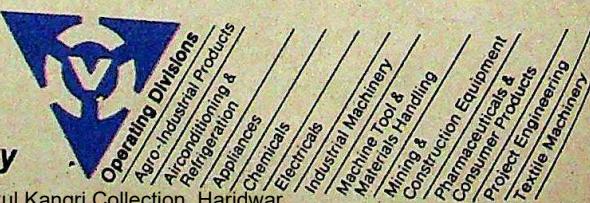


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Thatcher in her Finchley constituency with Asian supporters: Labour's love lost

UK ELECTIONS

## The Asian Vote

**B**RITAIN'S four per cent ethnic minorities went unrepresented once again when Parliament convened after the Tories' predictable victory in the general elections last month. Even though the number of Asian and black candidates rose noticeably from six in 1979 to 16 in 1983, they do not appear to have won the confidence of the British electorate enough to represent the community as a whole.

Both the party break-up of Asian candidates and the community's voting patterns indicate a move away from the Labour affiliations of the early rural immigrants from the subcontinent. The 14 Asian contestants were split up into three Conservative; three Social Democratic Party (SDP)-Liberal Alliance; two Labour; one independent Labour; and assorted groups such as 'Stop Deportation of Black People', 'Multi-racial People's Party' and 'Ethnic Minority'.

All three major parties printed election literature in Asian languages in many areas in an energetic campaign. The most successful Asian candidate, Conservative Pramila Le Hunt, rapidly ran through her wardrobe

during a brisk campaign in Birmingham's Ladywood constituency. Switching from skirts for the indigenous population, to salwars for the Sikh community and saris for street canvassing, the Calcutta-born Le Hunt, 42, rushed around from a gurudwara (speaking fluent Punjabi) to a Labour voting Irish council block. However, despite receiving 27 per cent of the constituency vote, she lost to the overwhelming support for the English Labour candidate.

**Split Vote:** A quick analysis made by Mohammed Anwar of the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) indicates that the ethnic minority vote was split three ways between Labour, Conservative and the SDP-Liberal Alliance. There is some evidence that many business-owning Asians, who had once voted Labour when they arrived as manual labourers in Britain, were turning to the Conservative Party. Labour had promised import controls which would have hit the small shop owners in Southall and Birmingham, whose profits come mainly from cheap Indian cotton imports.

There are some 80 constituencies

around Britain which are considered to have a sizeable ethnic population. Some like Ladywood in Birmingham have a 42 per cent black and Asian population. However, as yet there is no firm proof to show whether the swing in Asian votes helped to win any marginal seats.

The growing reaction among Asians to support candidates from their own community has done little to counter this trend. Said Ashraf Kazi, editor of the London-based Urdu paper *Daily Jang*: "Our editorials pointed out that none of the existing parties had helped the ethnic minorities in any way. We told our readers that we believed that candidates from the subcontinent should be supported, whatever party they belonged to, because it is essential for us to have representation in Parliament." Echoed J.S. Sandhu, president of the Supreme Council of Sikhs: "The main thing is to give a protest vote, to show that our interests are not being looked after." However, as things stand, of the only three Asians ever elected to the House of Commons, the last was Shapurji Saklatvala, Communist MP in 1923; and presently the House of Lords has one—Lord Partap Chitnis, the Liberal David Steel's right-hand man in the recent elections.

**Low Involvement:** To some extent, Asian politics have remained quite insular

The degree of involvement with local party politics is perhaps best illustrated by the attitude of the Sikh organisations who recently participated in a 30,000-strong demonstration to protest against the Indian Government's handling of the Punjab situation. British papers showed their opinion of this 'partisan' act in the middle of a general election by ignoring the event altogether.

As early as 1974, a sample survey undertaken by the CRE found that out of a representative group of whites and Asians, 24 per cent of the Asians had not registered on the electoral roll. Said Anwar: "The first generation of immigrants thought they weren't going to stay here anyway, so they were concerned more with what was happening back home. Many had language problems as well—they still do—and were therefore unable to join in politics here." The survey also found that although many Asian voters belonged to a trade union or even an Asian religious or political organisation, few belonged to a British political party or indeed had ever attended a political meeting.

Surprisingly, the Nationality Act, implemented in January 1983, which was a



A Conservative ethnic poster: "Labour says he is black. Conservatives say he is British."

major talking point in the last election, not figure as a major Asian election issue time around. Tara Mukherjee of 'Ethnic nority', a loose coalition of some 31 groups, feels that the Act does not affect many Asians in reality and had more emotional than a practical impact. Said Conservative MP John Wheeler, chairman of Select Committee on Immigration: "As we are concerned, immigration is no longer a national issue."

**Conservative Slant:** Adds Bob Singh, a Birmingham factory owner and Conservative Party supporter: "Do you think Labour would not have brought the same kind of legislation? The Conservative Party manifesto states that 'To have good community relations we have to maintain effective immigration control. By passing the Nationality Act, we have created a sensible system of rights and a sound basis for control in the future.' Both the Labour and Social Democratic Alliance manifesto had pledged to repeal or replace the Nationality Act with a fairer programme."

For the black and Asian voters, major issues were unemployment and

## TANZANIA

# Crackdown

EVERY evening, Dar es Salaam's Asian residents climb into their cars and drive to the beach at Oyster Bay in almost ritual-like fashion for a glimpse of the setting sun and a spot of community gossip. However, their conversations in recent weeks have an urgency about them and are confined mainly to the Tanzanian Government's recent crackdown on what it calls "economic saboteurs", a move which has spread paranoia among the country's Asians.

Local politicians described the new economic offensive as being more aggressive than Tanzania's 1979 war against Uganda's Idi Amin. Reports from Dar es Salaam say that 1,300 people have been arrested since the Anti-Economic Sabotage Act took effect on March 25. No break-down of the latest figures is available but when the arrests totalled 700 in April, the Government identified 25 per cent as being Asian. Considering Asians number 55,000 at most—a mere 0.3 per cent of the 18 million population—their share of arrests easily explains the community's pronounced insecurity.

President Julius Nyerere's economic war comes about four months after the

attempted coup against him, and at a time of deepening economic crisis. One theory is that it has served to deflect public discontent and to lay the blame for shortages on the "saboteurs".

**Economic Crisis:** Such goods as cooking oil, soap, butter and basic drugs are in short supply, and even bread is at times difficult to obtain. A white collar worker in Dar es Salaam said the food shortages were the worst in living memory. Over the weekend, Algeria responded to urgent Tanzanian requests by despatching two C1320 Hercules transport aircraft carrying foodstuffs including dates that the local Muslims use to break the Ramadan fast.

Since 1971-72, the volume of export crops declined by 40 per cent, losing the country some \$900 million in potential earnings till the end of the decade. In early June, the Government disclosed that the Gross National Product declined by 3.2 per cent in 1982. Exports from mainland Tanzania fell 20 per cent over the previous year, a loss of \$89 million.

While President Nyerere has blamed low world commodity prices and "economic saboteurs" for the country's worsening economic crisis, others blame bad implementation, bad weather and poor world commodity prices for much of the decline. "Economic sabotage" is a loosely defined, catch-all term for a wide variety of activities. Most of those arrested on this charge were allegedly

found hoarding bags of salt, tons of cooking oil, and stacks of paper money, or possessing luxury items whose purchase with duty paid could not be proved by receipt.

Asians have been arrested along with others in the move because, dominating the country's commerce and being relatively affluent, they are conspicuous and easy targets. They are also more likely to have electrical appliances or an extra bag of rice or two, which, for the Tanzanian authorities, is all that is needed to make an arrest on the grounds of hoarding scarce commodities. Essentially a small community, Asians comprise a majority of businessmen and retail traders, and a small percentage of professionals. It has long been recognised in Tanzania that for basic items like batteries or razor blades, an Asian trader is likely to be the only source.

**Worried Asians:** But Nyerere's government has been at pains to stress that this campaign is not aimed at particular individuals or communities. "But there is no doubt that the number of arrests has greatly disturbed the Asian community," said a Dar es Salaam resident. "Although there has been some improvement in the last week or so," he continued, "Asians are still worried. Many have told me they would leave today if they could, even without their belongings." The Indian and British high commissions in the Tanzanian capital

have reported that many Asians have fled the country.

One ethnic group has been particularly affected: the Indian community, which has seized 1,700 properties worth £10 million in a single month. Some 1,500 Indian residents are believed to have fled the country, leaving behind wealth and property.

A reporter said: "I saw a truckload of goods being transported to Dar es Salaam station to be turned into cash. After everything was sold, the truck was driven away in the next morning."

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## MAURITIUS

# Poll Fever

**E**IIGHTY-THREE-year-old former prime minister Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam might almost be described as a political astrologer. Exactly one year ago when the coalition Government led by Aneerud Jugnauth took office, Ramgoolam perceptively predicted that it would not last. He even went further and specifically warned that Mauritian Militant Movement (MMM) leader Paul Berenger would bring about the downfall of the Government by his impetuosity and determination to have his way on every issue. In the event this is exactly what has happened. Jugnauth was forced to dissolve Parliament on June 17 and announced that elections would be held soon.

The symptoms began showing a long time ago. During the last one year the Government has been beset by recurring crises and personality clashes. Jugnauth himself was driven to admit: "Trouble started when Berenger saw that I cannot be wax in his hands."

**Recurring Crises:** In February the Government was rocked when the Information and Broadcasting Minister Harish Boodhoo tried to sack Gaetan Essoo, the director-general of the national radio/television station, for unilaterally deciding to broadcast the national anthem in Creole. Berenger immediately came out in support of Essoo thinking Jugnauth would back him. When Jugnauth declined to do so, Berenger was so annoyed that he threatened to resign.

The next flash-point came on March 23. It began when Speaker Ajay Dhaby clashed with Berenger in Parliament. Berenger tried to interrupt a discussion and was called to order by the speaker. Taking umbrage at this Berenger refused to withdraw his remarks even after Jugnauth asked him to. Instead of conceding the point, Berenger walked out remarking as he went that "this cannot continue any longer". He was back in the chamber a few moments later to announce his resignation. Soon afterwards 10 other ministers followed suit.

The mass resignations left Jugnauth in a very tight spot. He was left with only five ministers to carry on the task of governing. He was left with no other alternative but to adjourn the business of the day until a new cabinet was formed on March 28.

But even after the new Cabinet was formed the Government was still clinging to office by the skin of its teeth. Jugnauth's group and Berenger's MMM both controlled 29 seats each, and the Government's survival depended on four independents. Also there

was no assurance that the independents would continue to support Jugnauth. In this uncertain situation Jugnauth realised that he would not be able to push through the national budget for 1983-84 which was supposed to have been presented by June 30. He however took advantage of the fact that the Mauritian Constitution permits him to postpone presenting the budget till October.

**Election Alliances:** Jugnauth is confident that he will be back in power in October to present the budget. Last fortnight, the Government announced that the elections would be held on August 21.

The coming elections promise to be something of a watershed in Mauritian politics. In one of the opening moves Jugnauth has merged his newly-launched party with Harish Boodhoo's Mauritius Socialist Party. There are also strong indications that Jugnauth will make common cause with Ramgoolam to capture the Hindu vote. Though they were in different camps during the last elections both leaders are known to believe that if Berenger comes to power in the next general elections it will be the first step towards the installing of a fascist re-



Berenger (left) and Jugnauth: at odds

gime. Commenting on the need to join hands with Ramgoolam Jugnauth said recently: "Either we hang together or we hang apart. That will be the end of everything, freedom, human dignity, human rights, culture and language. After all compared to Berenger, Ramgoolam is an angel."

If Jugnauth and Ramgoolam join hands the alliance will have fairly bright prospects of returning to power. Ramgoolam still commands a large measure of respect amongst the Hindu community and his stock has been rising ever since the new Government took office. On the other hand Berenger has the full backing of the Muslims and the rest of the island's population except the Hindus. Berenger has also mustered support amongst the Shudras and the Rajputs who together constitute 30 per cent of the Hindu population. A majority of the Telugus and the Tamils are also lending support to Berenger. One way or the other the coming elections will see a battle for the votes of the Hindu community.

—TEKLALL GUNESH in Port Louis

gements. Nuclear disarmament, the Common Market and the Soviet Union did not concern them, though the younger Asians are showing more interest in national issues such as these. For those who came to Britain from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, the rift with their young has been a major worry. The fault, they feel, lay in deteriorating standards of education, lawlessness on the streets and the influence of television.

Mrs Thatcher is widely quoted as seeking a return to Victorian values, to "work jolly hard, to improve oneself and to live within one's income". The elders of the immigrant communities would be the first to agree to the importance of these values which they find their young do not possess. Add to that Mrs Thatcher's theory on 'women best at home' and as Le Hunt believes Asians make natural Conservatives. As for the rest, the unemployed and the racially discriminated blacks and browns it's probably a long time till they find a British political party that will look after their needs.

—BONNY MUKHERJEE

have reportedly been swamped with visa and immigrant applications. Most Asians in Tanzania today hold local citizenship, while some 5,000 have Indian passports.

One early report said the police seized 1.7 million shillings (Rs 17 lakh) in a single raid. Under the new law, residents are required to account for their wealth and be able to prove they acquired property legally. A West European reporter saw an Asian family drive a truckload of possessions to a police station to have the goods registered, only to be turned away because of the late hour. Afraid that they would lose everything in a raid, the family left the truck in the street and discovered it looted the next morning.

And there are other stories—according to one of them, some panic-stricken Asians have even resorted to burning caches of bank notes, for fear of being arrested and given the maximum 14-year sentence under the new law. Yet another report has it that several dozen foam mattresses were seen bobbing their way across the Indian Ocean in Tanzania's sea-port of Tanga.

The state-owned Bank of Tanzania has reported an all-time record for deposits during the past two months, as people have rushed to deposit money before it could possibly be seized. But this has had the effect of bringing commerce in much of the country to a halt.

—AMRITA CHATTERJEE in Nairobi

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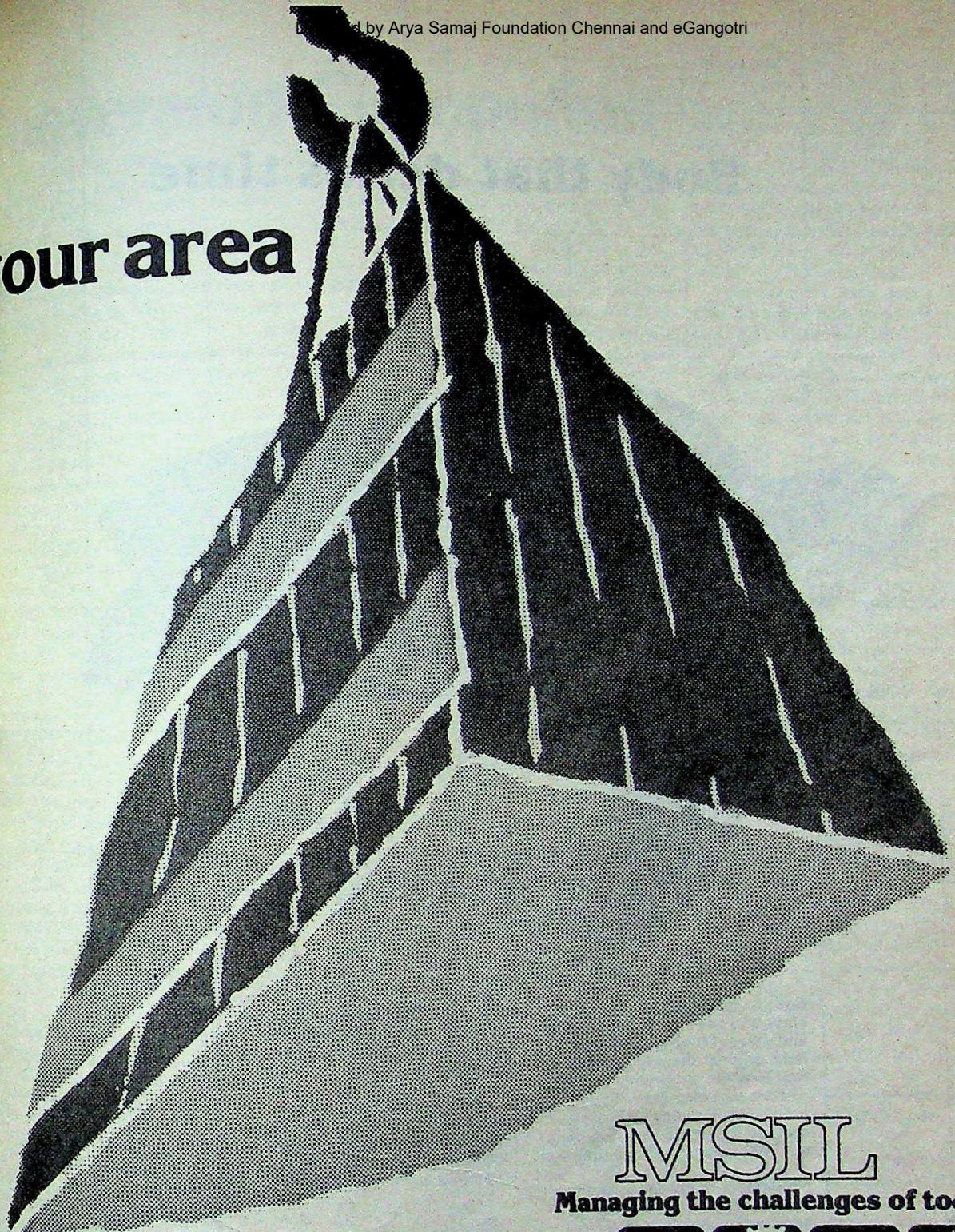
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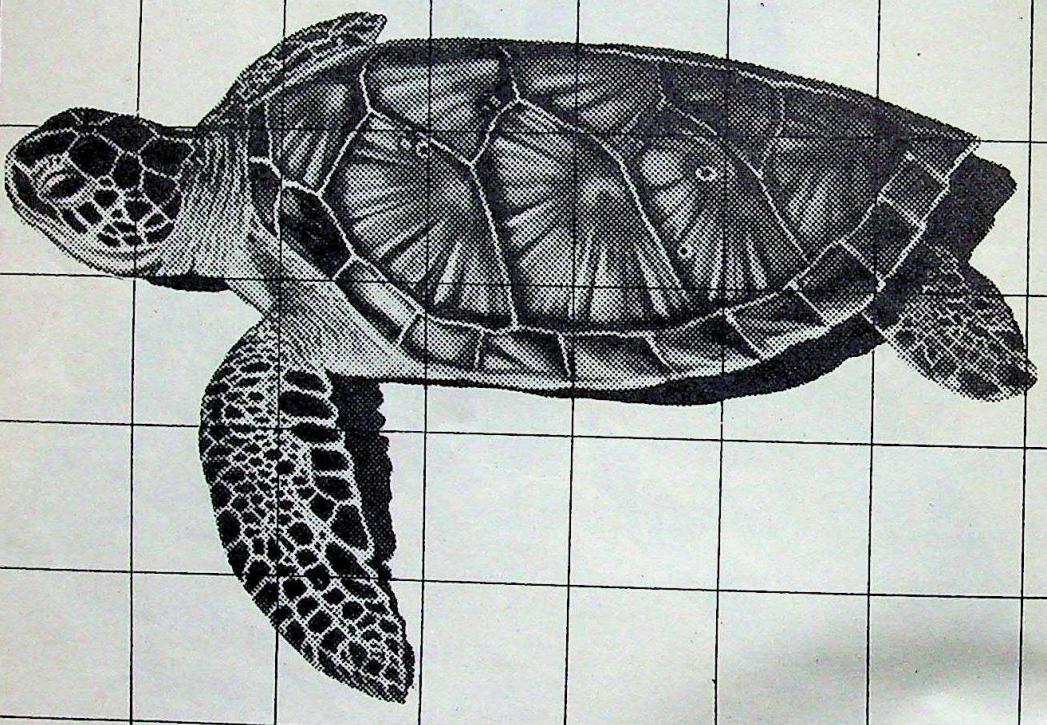
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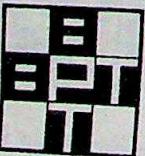


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# Conversion Commotion

**N**OT SINCE 1904 when Ratanji Dadabhoy Tata petitioned the Bombay High Court to demand that his French-born wife Suzanne be permitted entry into Zoroastrian fire temples have feelings run so high in India's tiny Parsi community of 80,000. The court had then ruled that though Mrs Tata, mother of the industrialist J.R.D. Tata, might have gone through a 'navjote' ceremony, she was not entitled to entry into religious places. The judge observed that while the Zoroastrian religion might have recommended conversion at one time, the founders of the various temple trusts had clearly never intended that the doors be thrown open to any other than the descendants of those Zoroastrians who fled Iran and arrived in India in 630 A.D.

Now once again controversy surrounds the acceptance of a non-Parsi who has embraced the Zoroastrian religion through a navjote ceremony—an initiation rite that all Zoroastrians must undergo. The focus of attention this time is Joseph Peterson, an American chemical engineer whose navjote was performed four months ago in New Rochelle, New York. Impressed by the American's knowledge of Zoroastrian scriptures and his mastery over the now dead language of Avesta, Noshir Antia, a Bombay-born Parsi priest settled in the US agreed to perform the ceremony claiming not to accept such a devoted follower who had been practising the religion on his own for six years would amount to acting against the tenets of the faith.

**Angry Reaction:** Peterson's Parsi sponsors in the US could hardly have anticipated the hue and cry in the community back home. Angry letters have been pouring into the offices of the Parsi daily *Jame Amshed*—a bastion of orthodoxy—as well as the community's lively monthly magazine *Parsiana*. At a meeting last fortnight, Khojeste Mistree, an Oxford-educated former chartered accountant who fancies himself as a latter-day religious revivalist, thundered that the Zoroastrian Association of Chicago which had endorsed the ceremony, and had reportedly called for more conversions, should be excommunicated. "The only solution is for a split in the community. Let those who advocate these reforms set up their own temple and go their own way," he said,

threatening that Peterson and the priests who had performed the ceremony would be "bashed up" if they attempted to come to Bombay and enter the fire temples.

Taking up the issue, a meeting organised by the Council of Vigilant Parsis criticised the Bombay Parsi Panchayat for not condemning the Peterson conversion which, it felt, would defile the community. Breaking a silence of three and a half months, the panchayat last fortnight issued a mild statement to the effect that it viewed the conversion with "disfavour", and that Peterson would

whose readership is almost entirely non-Parsi, has come out strongly in favour of the reformists. Said the *Samachar*'s Parsi Editor Jehan Daruwalla: "The Peterson conversion may be a stunt, but what is the point of making a rumpus 12,000 miles away? This total ban on conversion is a reinterpretation and rewriting of our scriptures. If we don't arrive at some method to allow new entrants into the religion, the community will die out by the end of the century."

Daruwalla's fears seem justified—to-day, the world Parsi population stands at a mere 1,25,000. With 80,000 in India, the rest are scattered in Iran, Pakistan, the US, Canada and England. The majority are settled in Bombay, which has 63,000 Parsis who have made enormous contributions to the city's economic, social and cultural life. The death rate of the Parsis far exceeds the birth rate—the population in India has been declining at the rate of 1,000 a year. Forty per cent are now in the age bracket of 45–65. According to Daruwalla, two out of every three Zoroastrians abroad marry outside the community—in India the ratio is one in six.

**Financial Benefits:** Daruwalla feels that one reason for the community's strong aversion to conversions is the fear that converts would be entitled to the substantial benefits of the Parsi charitable trusts. In Maharashtra alone, trusts for medical care, housing and education have a capital of some Rs 50 crore, with even larger assets in real estate. But this view does not find acceptance everywhere—the Editor of *Parsiana*, Jehangir Patel, says: "The issue of conversion is basically an emotional one, and today the benefits that would accrue from the trusts are marginal."

Peterson's conversion is the main bone of contention within the community, but there are other issues as well. Conductor Zubin Mehta's film project on the religion, titled *A Quest for Zarathustra*, which is being partially funded by the Oriental Heritage Trust under the chairmanship of noted jurist Nani Palkhivala, has come in for sharp criticism for reported "inaccuracies".

Patel feels the basic mistake people make is to always equate the Parsi community with the Zoroastrian religion. "The community may not continue to exist beyond this century but the religion will not die out," says he. But the community, judging by the sound and fury generated by the recent events, is undoubtedly very much alive and kicking.

—COOMI KAPOOR

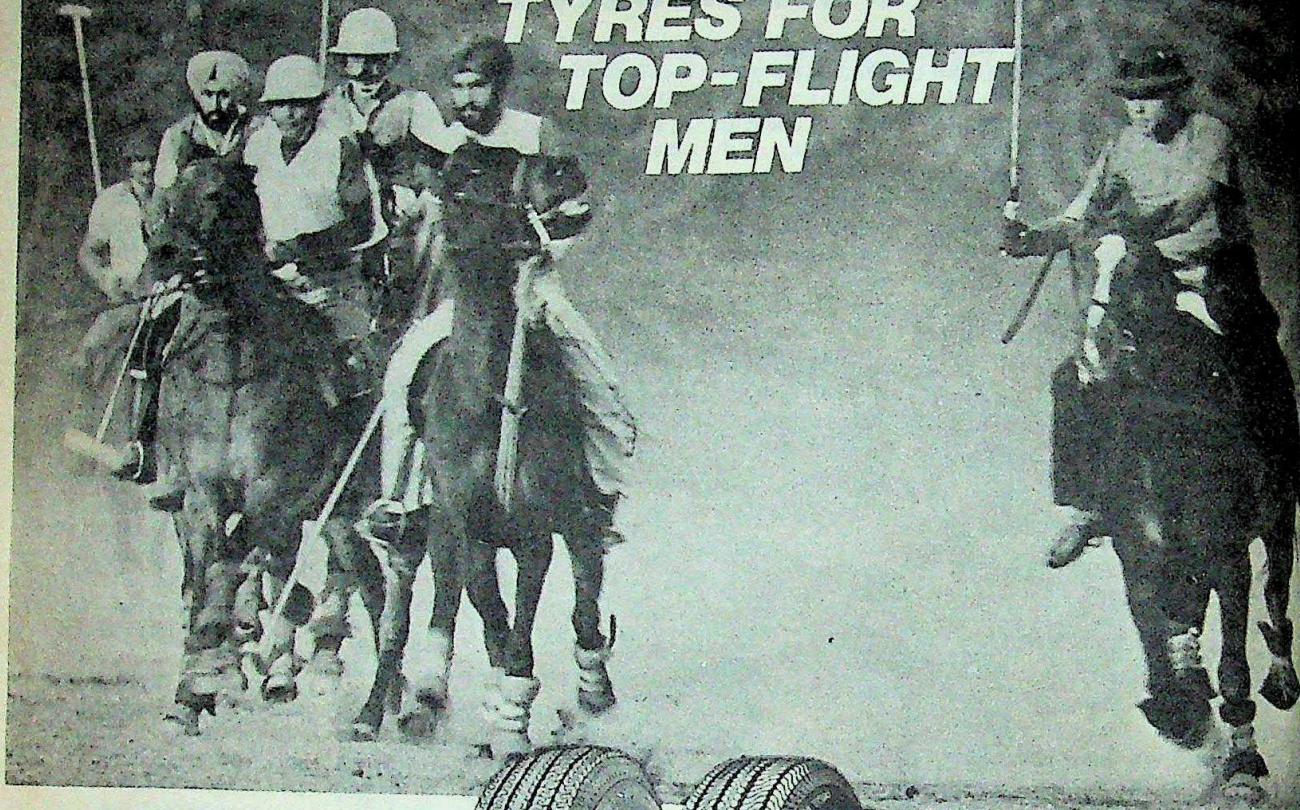


Mistree addressing a meeting (top) and Peterson's navjote ceremony: orthodox revival

not be entitled to any of the benefits of the Parsi trust funds.

**Declining Population:** While the exclusively Parsi *Jame Amshed* has been taking a consistently hard line, Bombay's highest-circulated Gujarati daily *Bombay Samachar*,

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DELHI

# Operation Clean-up

FOR THE capital's five lakh office-goers the revelations were startling and horrifying. Until the four high-powered panels appointed by Delhi's Lt-Governor Jagmohan submitted their reports last fortnight on New Delhi's 200-odd high-rise buildings, and 75 cinema houses, the capital's inhabitants were unaware of the dangers to which they were exposed.

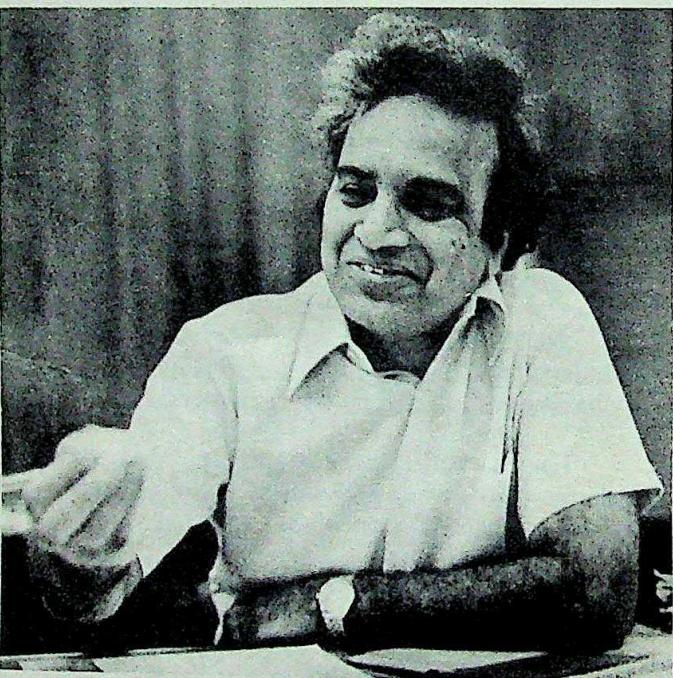
Each one of the premises inspected by the civic and police officials revealed gross violation of sanctioned building plans, inadequate and faulty fire-fighting equipment, conversion of parking space into restaurants, dumping of combustible material in basements and generally poor maintenance. Says Jagmohan: "If corrective measures are not taken on the reports, most of the buildings pose serious danger to the lives of the people working there. Each one of the buildings' owners or promoters has a certain responsibility towards his clients other than purely business deals. If he does not act, the Delhi Administration can't sit back and watch." The crackdown yielded immediate results as many of the building owners removed unauthorised structures and placed orders for fresh fire-fighting equipment.

Jagmohan's drive against the unsafe buildings started soon after Gopala Towers, a 13-storey building in west Delhi, was gutted last month. Earlier, the Indian Oil Corporation's liquid petroleum gas plant in Shakurbasti was completely burnt, causing a loss of Rs 4 crore to the public sector undertaking. While the administration and Raj Kumar Gupta, the promoter of Gopala Towers were embroiled in a legal battle, Jagmohan directed Delhi Development Authority (DDA) Vice-Chairman Harish Khanna, Municipal Corporation Delhi (MCD) Commissioner Pramod Prakash Shrivastav and New Delhi Municipal Committee (NDMC) Administrator Pramod Sagar Bhatnagar to submit comprehensive reports on all high-rise buildings in their areas within 48 hours. He also instructed the Deputy Commissioner (licensing), Delhi Police, R.P. Misra, to inspect all the cinema houses in the city.

**Offences:** The results of frenetic investigation by 200 officials of the three civic bodies are startling. Virtually all the 200-odd high-rise buildings, in which over 5 lakh people work, do not conform to safety regulations. The most common offences are:

- Fire-fighting equipment is not in working order.
- Parking and storage space is used for shops, offices and restaurants.
- Circulation areas are converted into offices or stores.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Lt-Governor Jagmohan: concerted drive

- There are no emergency exits.
- The occupants are not trained in the use of sophisticated fire-fighting equipment.
- Overhead water tanks meant for the wet riser system of fire fighting are connected to toilets and restaurant kitchens instead.

Commenting on his investigations, Bhatnagar said: "It was quite an experience and informative. Most of the buildings were violating all the safety rules with impunity." Khanna added: "The level of fire perception among both the builders and the occupants is limited. In most of the cases either the equipment was found faulty or people didn't know how to use it in case fire broke out. I have given notice to myself. In Vikas Minar (DDA headquarters) too, some lapses were discovered."

Responding to the reports, Sardarwant Singh, managing director of Skycraper Construction Company, said: "Though we had taken all the precautions, we are grateful to the Lt-governor for pointing out several fire hazards in the buildings. We will definitely remove them." That, however, is easier said than done. For the investigations have thrown up a number of economic problems for the owners of these buildings. Removal of unauthorised structures and installation of full safety equipment would involve colossal losses.

**Monetary Returns:** A square foot of commercial space in Connaught Place is worth Rs 2,000 and in south Delhi, Rs 1,500. Says an MCD official: "If a builder is able to convert 10,000 sq ft basement into commercial, he makes over Rs 2 crore straight away. For money is more important than safety measures." According to estimates by civic authorities, over 5 lakh sq ft of commercial space—worth over Rs 50 crore at current prices—has been created in the NDMC area alone. Even in Connaught Place, additional floors have been put up inside buildings—often with connivance of civic officials.

Ironically, some of the legal floors have been sold to public sector undertakings even banks. Says one bank manager: "Many of the offices are nothing less than death-traps. With narrow staircases, people will run over each other if

broke out in any of the buildings."

Since every available inch has been converted to commercial use—including space under staircases—there is no room for stand-by safety devices—shaft openings, protective metal components, fire and smoke-proof escape routes, insulations of electrical fittings, smoke detectors and sprinkler systems. A report by Delhi's chief fire officer some years ago stated that 175 of 200 high-rise buildings lacked fire-fighting equipment. The cause of insufficient vacant space. One claims a senior dozen buildings in Rajendra Place, New Delhi, and Connaught Place—the latter after 15 major high-rise areas—have no fire-fighting equipment at all.

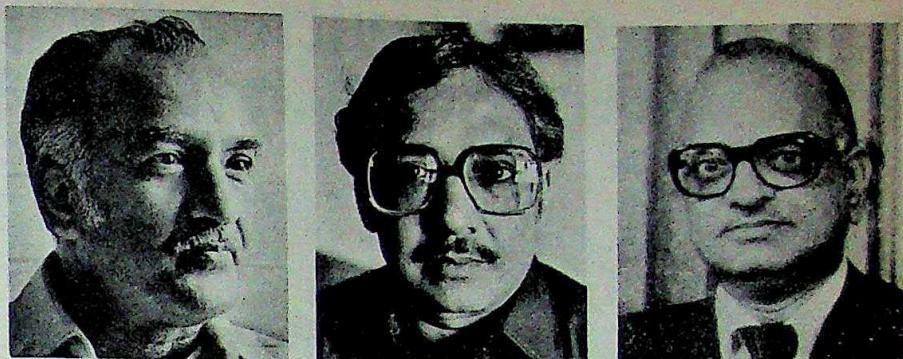
However, building owners and promoters accuse the administration of providing fire hazards to the public.

inadequate water, faulty electrical fittings, and inefficient service in the form of Delhi Electric Supply Undertaking personnel. Remarks Raj Kumar Gupta, managing director of United Towers Pvt Ltd, owners of ill-fated Gopala Towers: "If we provide unsafe buildings, our business is at stake. But though government loses nothing when they install standard substations in the high-rise buildings. Water pressure is so low that it will not reach the second floor; and if we install boosters, we face action. I am prepared to provide the most sophisticated fire-fighting equipment in all the buildings but where the guarantee that electricity will not cause a fire?"

But according to the civic authorities, the problem is not so much of fire-fighting equipment as of misuse of space and violation of building plans. Of the 80 buildings inspected by DDA officials, 60 were using parking space for commercial purposes. Says a senior MCD official: "It is not the question of misuse of the space but overall security of the buildings. By encroaching upon a space which is supposed to be vacant, these builders have made the buildings more congested, which will create massive problems in the event of mishap."

TACKLING the problem from another angle, Jagmohan wrote to the Union finance minister to investigate the link between various insurance companies and the building owners. He stated in his complaint that buildings have been insured for fabulous amounts, though they blatantly violate safety laws. He also requested the minister to institute an inquiry into how builders are able to collect heavy insurance cover. Jagmohan then turned to the Union minister for works and housing, asking him to penalise building owners proportionate to the amount they gain by misusing space. Says he: "No one can condone lapses which pose a serious threat to life and security of the people. Every one will have to conform to the laws of the land."

The problem though is largely a legacy of past mistakes. An uncontrolled rash of high-rise buildings followed Delhi Administration's liberalisation of construction rules in 1965. DDA, NDMC and MCD had launched a massive construction drive to meet the growing demand for commercial space in the city. Since speed was the prime consideration, safety rules were generally bypassed both by builders and civic authorities. Comments a senior executive of a multi-crore business corporation in Nirmal Towers: "It was only after 15 years that the serious fire at Gopala Towers forced the civic officials to wake up from their slumber to discover the fire hazards in the buildings which rose like monsters right under their nose."



(From left) Khanna, Bhatnagar and Shrivastav: high-powered investigation.

**Unsafe Buildings:** Even the inspection reports of NDMC, MCD and DDA indicate that many of the buildings have been misusing their complexes for many years; and many have been served notice to correct the situation. Among them:

■ Himalaya House, a multi-storeyed building in Connaught place was using the basement which was originally sanctioned for parking and storage as an Indian Airlines stationery godown and photostat shop and an office of a leading business concern. Electric substation, pump room, AC plant room and generator room were also operating in the basement. On its stilt floor, meant for parking and reception, State Bank of India had opened an office alongside a show-room of yet another commercial undertaking. But the building was equipped with only a portable fire extinguisher system. There was "no

adequate fire extinguishing arrangement," concluded the NDMC report signed by Chief Engineer V.P. Chetal. Over 2,000 employees work in this building.

■ Hansalaya, an 18-storeyed building on New Delhi's Barakhamba Road, was served notice for using its basement—meant for parking and an air-conditioning plant—for storing building materials like paints. Besides a hotel, over 2,000 employees and 4,000 visitors use this building every day.

■ Kanchenjunga, another multi-storeyed building on Barakhamba Road, was also found to be violating building bye-laws. The car parking area in the basement had godowns full of records and leather goods and the building was without any fire-fighting equipment.

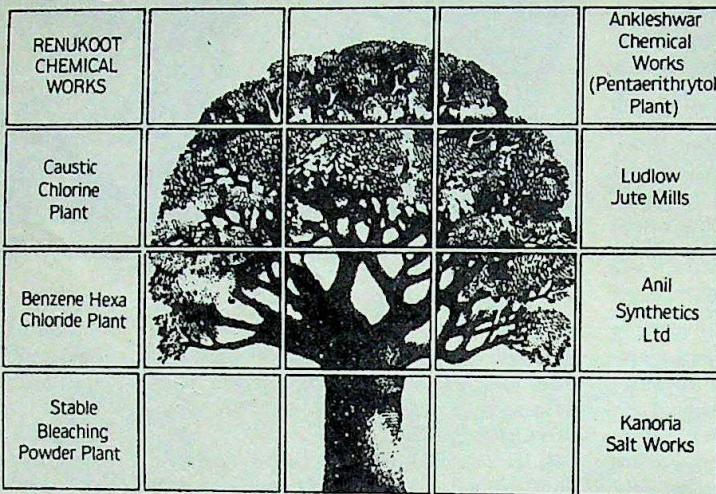
■ Nirmal Towers' entire basement—which was approved for parking by the



Nirmal Towers (left) and Vikas Minar: safety rules violated

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### ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS

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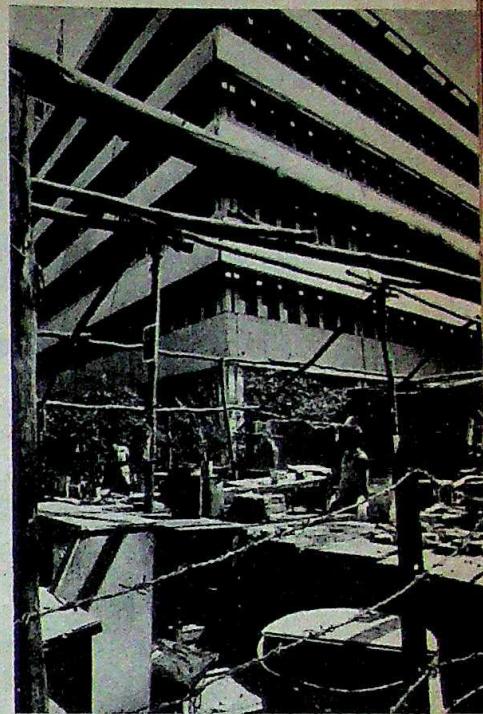
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Removing unauthorised construction at Rohit House (left) and a make-shift tea-stall near the American Center: potential traps

DMC—was being used as a ready-made garments shop. And its stilt floor—again meant for parking and a service store—was rented to a canteen and a garments shop, both of which are considered fire hazards. Surprisingly, there was no fire-fighting arrangement in the building which is used by over 5,000 people every day.

Surya Kiran buildings' promoters were charged for using two basement floors as godowns and offices containing inflammable items like stationery, films, tailoring and loose wiring.

Rohit House, a multi-storeyed building on Tolstoy Marg, was indicted as the entire basement—meant for parking—was commercially rented and there was no fire-fighting equipment.

Sagar Apartments, an exclusive residential complex on Tilak Marg, was served notice for opening a wine shop, and for using the basement for offices and storing packing materials. The building had no "proper fire-fighting arrangement". Besides, the dry riser system was not in order. Over 50 families live in the apartments.

**Cinemas Indicted:** While the commercial complexes were found lacking in safety measures, the condition of the capital's cinema houses was found to be worse. DCP Misra served notices on 21 cinemas for violating the terms of their licences that relate to provision of adequate safety measures. In a severe indictment, Misra wrote in his report, "Every inch of extra space available with the licensees has been converted into offices/

stores to yield more money. In doing so, in many cases, wooden partitions have been used and combustible materials like crates, stationery, old records have been stored. Necessary fire safety measures are also lacking in these structures."

According to Misra's confidential report, the basements of eight cinemas were

red that an additional floor has been illegally created between the first floor and the stilt floor. This poses a serious security threat. In fact the cinema owners let out the basement, the stilt floor and the third floor—meant variously for parking, cinema offices and circulating areas—to commercial firms, making the entire building a security risk. Yet another cinema owner had created an unauthorised hall behind the screen and rented it to a garment factory. This too posed a serious threat to the entire cinema house. And in a cinema in the diplomatic enclave, an unauthorised shed was built in which cooking gas cylinders were stored.

Meanwhile, real estate promoters have initiated steps to remove potential dangers. For instance, Nirmal Towers ordered the closure of canteen and garment shops on its premises. Orders for dependable fire-fighting equipment were also placed. Six of the 21 offending cinema houses undertook to implement the administration's directives within a fortnight.

But whether they be cinemas or high-rise buildings, Jagmohan seems bent on trailing all offenders. Asserts Municipal Commissioner Shrivastav: "We are determined to remove each and every danger wherever it exists. It is now or never. If we cave in now, the capital will become unsafe for human habitation." However, with political interference and the amount of money involved, Jagmohan's drive may yet prove short-lived.

—PRABHU CHAWLA



R.K. Gupta (left) and Tejwant Singh: on the defensive

misused for storage purposes, those of three others contained factories and two cinemas contained large commercial complexes. All these violations, according to Misra, pose a serious threat to movie-goers. In one cinema house in west Delhi a 10,000 sq ft bazar was being built on the stilt floor meant for the cinema's office. "Permitting such a big commercial complex," says Misra in his report, "in a cinema with a capacity of 1,401 seats without taking the views of the chief fire officer from the point of view of fire safety, may not be advisable."

In a south Delhi cinema, Misra discov-

# “Market leadership and technological excellence are the prime parameters of your Company’s destiny”



**Excerpts from the Statement made by  
Mr K B Lall, Chairman, on the occasion of the  
Fifty-third Annual General Meeting of  
Guest Keen Williams Limited held in Calcutta  
on 17th June, 1983.**

1982 has been a traumatic year for your Company. Misfortune seldom comes in single doses ... Viewed against the peak performance of 1981, the trough of 1982 provides a stark contrast. It may be useful to analyse the factors responsible for the reversal of fortune.

Our product-cum-market strategy has for many years placed a high degree of reliance on priority sectors, particularly transportation and power. We have nursed the belief that our businesses and risks are sufficiently diversified to counter cyclical swings and weather seasonal turbulence. And yet almost every segment of the customer profile has suffered demand setbacks in 1982.

... As the monsoon failed to progress during the middle of the year, the fear of declining purchasing power in the farm sector did not take long to affect adversely the demand for industrial products. In this context, the measures designed by Government to contain inflation could not but accentuate the downturn in demand. In the Year of Productivity, the focus changed from optimising output to curbing money supply. The manufacturers of finished pro-

ducts abruptly ran down their inventories. This had a cascading effect on units producing basic and intermediate materials.

Another set of well conceived measures aimed at improving industrial efficiency, by liberalising industry's access to imports from abroad and exposing it to the bracing winds of competition, partially misfired. The overseas producers faced with stagnating markets in their own hemisphere graciously seized the opportunity to dump their surpluses to the detriment of even the efficient producers at home.

In consequence, offtake of indigenous products declined over a wide range. In our own market squares, the spin-off effect of deceleration soon exceeded the most pessimistic projections. When vehicle builders became acutely conscious of their inventories, the component industry started grinding to a halt. And the market for intermediates such as forgings, high tensile fasteners, special steels, bright bars and metal pressings, which had been experiencing high growth rates in the previous two or three years, began to shrink.

Similarly, when State Electricity Boards cut back orders and postponed overdue

payments, the fallout on the electricity industry was widespread. The centre around which the electric motor industry and our own lamination product group revolves is the agricultural pumpset market. As demand for it took a deep dive, for the first time in many years, we found ourselves fighting more than one battle on several fronts.

In the meantime, all was not well at A Road. Multiplicity of unions complicated the bargaining process. But over the years we have learnt to live with it. What we could not accept was a degree of complacency in disrupting the work ethos. It norms, high itself felt through steady erosion of established norms and repeated efforts to deride endeavour to interrupt work on the shop floor. The malady was too widespread, too seated, to yield to partial or routine measures. The management found itself compelled to shut the factory gates on 10th June 1982. It was not until the close of the year that work could be resumed. In the meantime, when the books were closed on 31.12.1982, your Company's loss in turnover from Works in Eastern India amounted to much as Rs.50 crores.

There are many lessons to be drawn from the experience of 1982, at the macro, as also at the micro level.

The response to changing circumstances must be speedy if it is to be effective. Import liberalisations and credit curbs are both essential features of public policy. No change in its broad direction is indicated. But its timing and tuning have to be finely adjusted ... If our steel stockyards start filling up and corporate order books begin to look thin it is time to heed the signals from the market, to explore the errors in small print, and take corrective action without loss of time. The cost to the nation of the delay in response to the first intimations of a break in demand has been unduly high. And yet, it is difficult to be sure that the lesson has been duly learnt.

On 8th May 1981 I had occasion, while addressing the 51st Annual General Meeting, to call attention to the significant role of manufacturers of intermediates and components in the nation's industrial advance ... In 1982, GKW passed through a chastening experience, an uncomfortable feeling of being squeezed by the manufacturers of finished products on the one hand and suppliers of basic materials and services on the other. Nevertheless, my faith in the over-riding value of specialisation remains unshaken. I am convinced that a technically efficient and a financially sound component industry alone can provide a sound base for manufacturers of modern equipment and finished products to flourish. I, therefore, venture to renew on behalf of your Company its commitment to quality and technical excellence ...

In better times, we could perhaps afford to ignore the early signs of creeping sickness in our Works at Howrah. However, in 1982 we have had to pay a high price for our failure to take corrective action in time. It is now abundantly clear that if the health of our operations in Eastern India is not speedily restored, we run the risk of putting in jeopardy the livelihood of a large section of the GKW family. The concern for the future is now deeply felt and widely shared. The thrust now is on doing things a little cheaper, a little faster and a little better ... The manner in which major problems in the area of employee relations were happily resolved is a tribute to the maturity of our people and the sagacity of the union leadership. I should also like to express my gratitude to the Government of West Bengal for their help and guidance. The resulting improvement in the attitude to work of waste is most gratifying. It will be our endeavour to ensure that this improvement endures.

This will, however, not be enough. As is well known, we have five electric arc melting furnaces and four rolling mills which, clearly established, cannot possibly be sustained through the prohibitive cost of captive generation. We have no recourse other than to depend upon the public utility system if we are to maintain the security of employment of our large work force and

ensure full utilisation of the installed capacity to produce special steels. We have official permission to consume an electrical load of about 25 MW. Our experience has been that by and large we have no productive power for a third of the day and less than half of our requirement for another third of the day. There is no way in which any energy intensive activity can survive if it is denied regular supply of its most essential input for over 60% of the time. These figures make horrifying reading. But I feel obliged to focus attention on them. We have conveyed to the authorities full information on our present plight, and our concern in regard to its serious consequences. I am glad to be able to report that their attitude is helpful and their response promising. It is our hope that with their assistance, we will soon succeed in restoring viability to our Works in Eastern India.

It has not taken us long to put idle machines in motion again. Nor did it prove difficult to make our presence felt in the market ... The comparative ease with which market re-entry has been possible is evidence of the enormous goodwill we continue to enjoy. Our short term focus is on further steps to improve operational efficiency and achieve savings in the use of materials, energy and other inputs. In the longer term, we recognise that market leadership and technological excellence are the prime parameters of your Company's destiny. We will, therefore, be ready to consider making fresh investments in upgrading existing assets as soon as we are confident of earning a fair return. It would make our task easier if the relevant provisions in the corporate tax structure could take into account the relentless impact of inflation on replacement costs more fully than has been possible so far.

Undaunted by the recent deterioration in trading conditions and growth prospects, we have implemented our plans for development of the new greenfield site at Kanhe with speed and determination. It gives me pleasure to report that work is ahead of schedule ... A hand picked team has been placed in command of the operation ... The main factory building will soon be ready for occupation ... The imported presses are arriving on site and the erection team is working hard to ensure that trial runs start before the year is out. We have fulfilled on time all the prescribed requirements to earn Pioneer Status and expect to receive soon from the State Industrial Corporation of Maharashtra Ltd., the financial facilities we are now entitled to.

We expect to have in 1984 a versatile press shop, contemporaneous in design, comprehensive in bed size and tonnage rating, and capable of supplying an extensive range of metal pressed components. Our production facilities will be well placed to service the expansion requirements of the current customer spread as also the emerging demands of the new ventures ... These will come on stream appropriately at a juncture when the automotive industry in India is poised to leap forward in modernising and upgrading its technology.

It has not been easy to raise resources for this forward looking venture at a time of falling sales and revenues ... In August 1982, we issued convertible debentures amounting to Rs. 15.25 crores. We are grateful to the financial institutions and investing public for their support. With the conversion of these debentures in April 1983, twenty-eight thousand new shareholders have a stake in GKW. I welcome them to our fold and assure them of our determination to live up to the confidence they have reposed in us.

Our quest for diversification continues. In fact, the experience of 1982 persuades us to survey other market segments and explore new technologies ... The prospects for some appear to be brighter than for others. We have been encouraged by our success in the export of fasteners, in the face of difficult trading conditions, to look for enduring opportunities in the changing structure of fastener production in Western Europe. We are also assessing the feasibility of developing a manufacturing base for high technology automotive components for front wheel driven vehicles. In pursuing these exercises, we are drawing heavily on the goodwill, the experience and the technology of our International Associates, Guest Keen & Nettlefolds, p.l.c. With their help we will do our best to process these proposals to fruition.

The operating results for the year under report have been adverse. We have, therefore, thought fit to recommend a dividend of only five percent. This is certainly meagre by our past standards and future expectations. In endorsing this recommendation, you will be sharing the consequences of temporary adversity and reiterating your confidence in the future.

The general prospect is not as bright as it looked thirteen months ago. Nevertheless, the imperatives for accelerating the rate of industrial growth are as strong as ever. And the resilience shown by your managers and men in meeting the challenges of 1982 holds promise for the future ... They have emerged from the travail more determined and more united in their commitment. They deserve your appreciation for the fortitude and patience they have shown in bearing their share of hardships.

... I am sure you will share my conviction that they can be depended upon to take your Company forward as fast as the improvement in business environment permits.

(This does not purport to be a report of the proceedings of the Annual General Meeting)



BIHAR

# Radical Remedies

**I**F THE disease defies diagnosis, suppress the symptoms: This—judging by the *ad-interim* report submitted to Chief Minister Dr Jagannath—seems to be the working principle of Bihar's University Enquiry Commission (UEC). The commission, headed by eminent educationist, Dr V.S. Jha, recommends that all strikes be banned as well as university elections, and what has particularly earned the ire of academics, that no teacher be allowed to participate actively in politics.

The commission was set up during President's rule in April 1980—when institutions of higher learning were felt to have reached a nadir—with a mandate to review the statutes governing Bihar's universities, and to draft an entirely new act. Dr Jha's qualifications are impeccable. A former vice-chancellor of Banaras Hindu University, he has been a member of the Kothari Commission and had gone into the affairs of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) earlier.

But it is unlikely that his previous experience of disturbed universities could have prepared him for the situation in Bihar's institutions of higher learning. According to a senior teacher of Patna University, every third student carries arms. There are over a hundred cases of stabbing every year, about five or six of them fatal. About six months ago the district administration had listed over 150 students for rustication or detention under the Crime

Control and National Security Acts. But no action has so far been taken. The university—considered the premier academic institution in the state—has witnessed eight changes of vice-chancellors in the recent past.

Meanwhile the commission has been pondering the problem for three years—during which it visited but three of the seven universities, and 24 colleges. The recommendations that have resulted from this labour have drawn brickbats from teachers and students alike. The report briefly surveys the problems of Bihar's university education system and identifies some of the major reasons for its ineffectual functioning and the "prevailing state of indiscipline and corrupt practices which have led to deterioration in the standard in teaching, research and examination".

**Recommendations:** The report goes on to make the following recommendations:

- strikes by students, teachers and employees be banned;
- standing tribunals be established to decide disputes between university authorities and government and students, teachers and employees;
- elections to senates, syndicates, academic councils, faculties and students' unions be stopped;
- lecturers be appointed according to merit determined by competitive examinations;
- teachers be statutorily debarred from

seeking election to Parliament, legislative assemblies and civic bodies;

► vice-chancellors be appointed according to their ability to lead the university through academic competence, administrative ability and moral stature.

► Communal, caste, regional and political considerations should not be allowed to influence appointments;

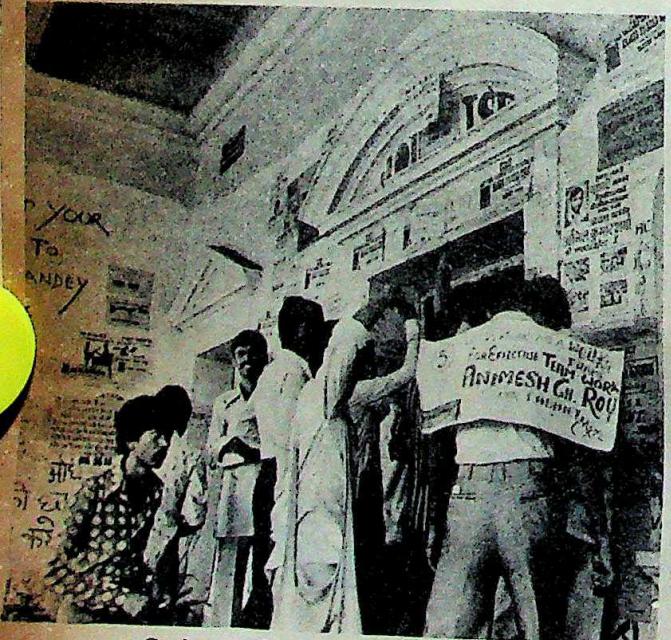
► vice-chancellors should not be transferred or prematurely removed from their posts unless found guilty of moral turpitude.

► a commission for higher education established to offset the strains in the nomous functioning of universities;

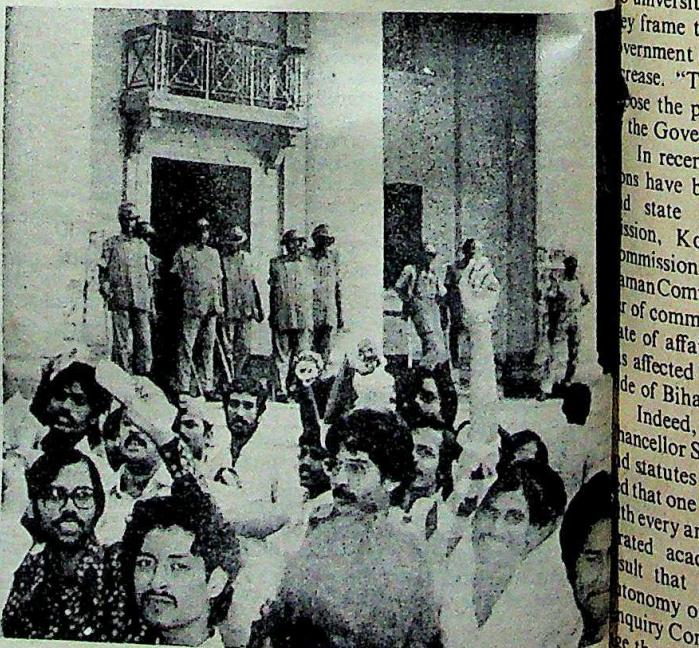
► an 'open university' patterned on the United Kingdom be established.

Reacting to the report, Dr A.K. Singh, general secretary of the Bihar Cities' Ironical Council for Education, commented that the report revealed the tragic failure of the committee—he began to identify the ailments of higher education and their remedies. Dr Ganesh Prasad Singh, vice-chancellor of Patna University, a more respected leader among the teaching community, felt that the ban on the political activities of teachers was "impractical". Instead of curbing the legitimate and constructive activities of teachers, the commission should have sought ways to create an atmosphere in which strikes and agitation would not take place, he said.

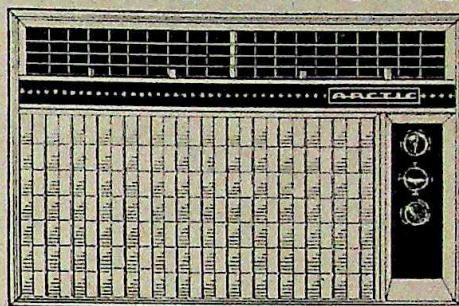
**Academic Bondage:** Describing the report as a "death-warrant" for university autonomy, Dr Ramjee Singh, president of the Federation of University Sector Government Teachers' Association of Bihar (FUSGB), commented that Dr Jha appears to have forgotten his own earlier view that university



Students' union election scene at Patna University (left) and (right) student demonstration: worsening situation



# THE ARCTIC ADVANTAGE



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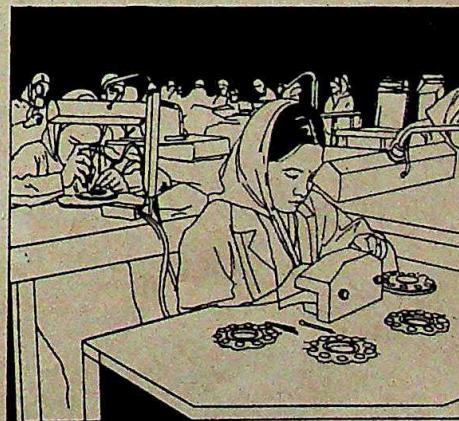
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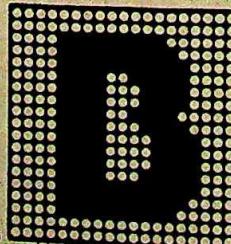
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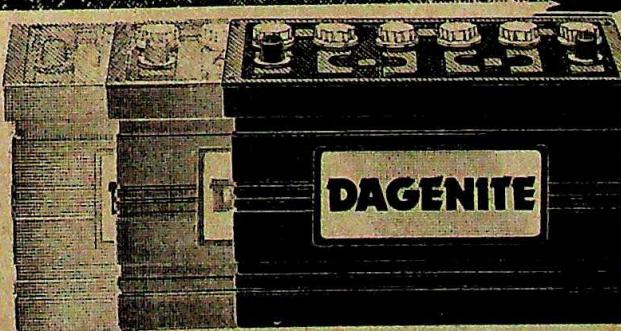
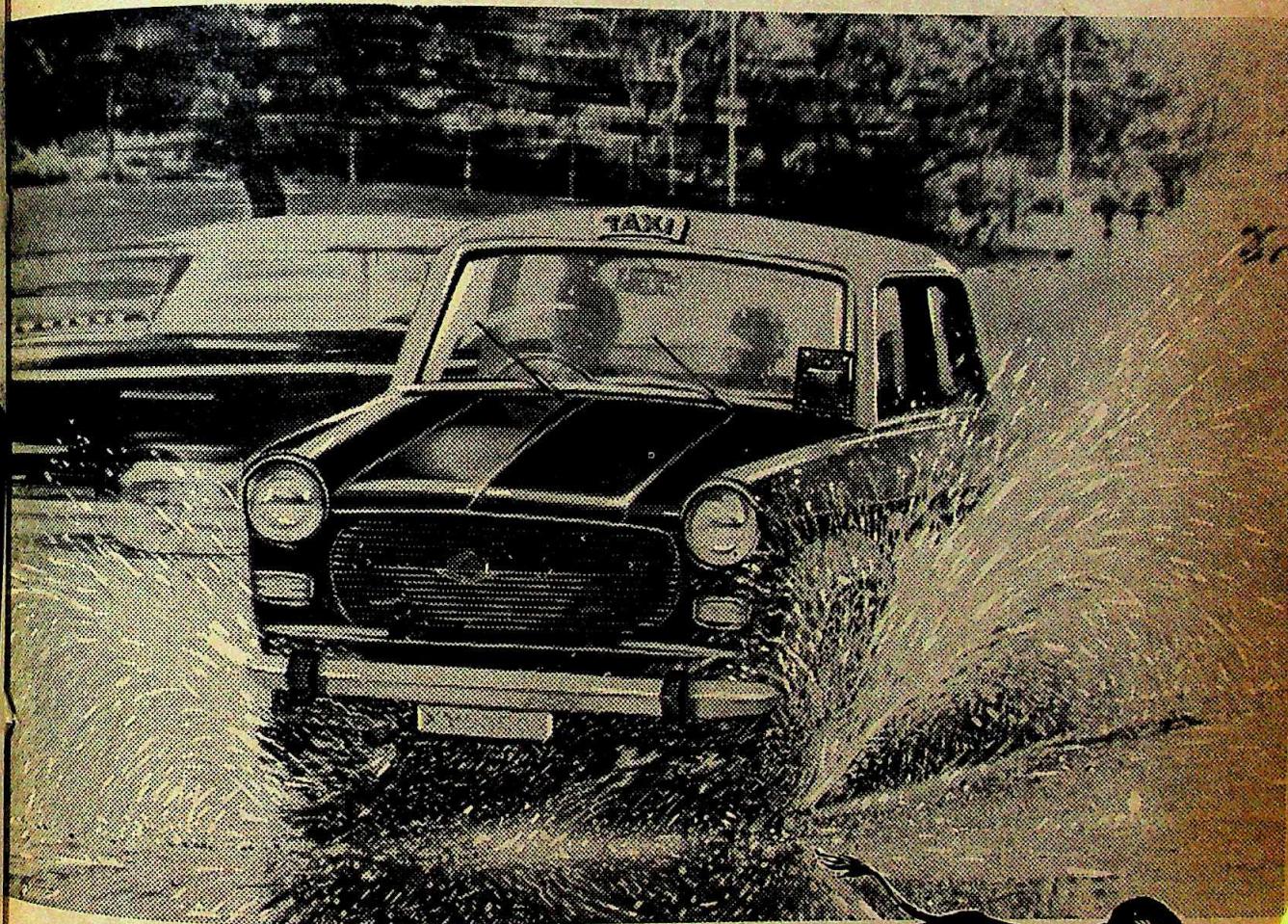
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THE BIRLAS

# EMPIRE IN TRANSITION

THEY come across as a rather colourless lot; sober businessmen who would rather not talk too much about what they do. Articulate expression is not one of their gifts, most of them preferring to explain their extraordinary success in terms of platitudes: father

taught us to work hard, and to create assets and employment. Beyond a point, they give away nothing.

Nevertheless, as industrial sagas go, theirs is hard to beat. With a history that goes back no more than 65 years, when the Birla group's first jute mill went into opera-

tion, till today—when over 200 companies control assets estimated at around Rs 10,000 crore and sell goods every year worth Rs 30,000 crore—the Birlas? Like other industrial records can have few parallels, comparable settings.

Started by Ghanshyamdas Birla,

The Birla inheritors: (top row from left) Basant Kumar, Aditya, Sjdarshan, Ganga Prasad; (middle row) Krishna Kum, Lakshmi Niwas, Madho Prasad; (bottom) Ashok, Chandrakant

ed in London last month, the group's size and range of activities now beggars the imagination, ranking among the top two in the country in size but easily outpacing the number one Tatas in the range and breadth of its operations. No fewer than 30 of the 250 largest private sector companies come under the Birla fold, and in a variety of industries the group has climbed to a commanding position.

In the country's single most important industry, textiles, the Birlas have reached an unassailable position of dominance through the operations of such giant companies as Century Spinning, Gwalior Rayon, Kesonam Industries, Jiyajeerao Cotton, Century Jyotika and Indian Rayon. They have the country's biggest jute units, produce 45 per cent of its aluminium and own the single largest tea company.

They also own India's second largest paper unit (Orient Paper) apart from a number of smaller paper units, the biggest car manufacturing company (Hindustan Motors), and have an important presence in shipping and fertiliser. Their six sugar companies produce 3 per cent of the country's sugar, and with major investments in progress under way, will in two years' time account for one-fifth of total sugar output, with an installed capacity of 8 million tonnes. Apart from all these, the Birla group includes a variety of engineering companies that produce items as varied as lifts, textile machinery, railway wagons, fans and professional electronic equipment. Before the Government nationalised them, the Birlas also ran some of the country's biggest coal and insurance companies, as well as a major bank.

The group is also unequalled in that it is the country's only truly multinational group, with operations spanning nearly a dozen countries, involving large paper mills, the setting up of steel plant, and the running of textile units and oil mills. In Africa alone, the group controls or manages assets estimated at Rs 6,000 crore.

**Crucial Period:** This mammoth empire now caught in an uncertain moment of transition. With the group founder, industrial titan and family head gone last month, and another father figure—G.D. Birla's younger brother B.M. Birla—having passed away last year, will the group now be rudderless? Like other smaller industrial houses that have split once the founder-figure was gone, will the surviving Birlas soon be heading in separate ways? Or, given the innate jealousies that have plagued so much of Indian family business, will the different members of the Birla family wrestle behind closed

doors for control of various companies? Even if no bitter rivalries surface, will the group, minus GD's vision and drive, lose its momentum of growth and diversification?

Definitive answers to these questions are risky, but the picture that the Birlas presented last fortnight was one of rocklike stability. Nothing, it seemed, was about to change. As in everything else, G.D. Birla had seen far into the future and planned a smooth transition.

As his eldest son, Lakshmi Niwas Birla, explains: "We are not a group in the sense that the public normally sees us. Each member of the family has his own companies in whose functioning the others do not interfere. There is no one central authority, and at the end my father had direct res-

ponsibility. (sales: Rs 30.25 crore) in bagging an order for electric meters—after quoting at a price that left no room for profits. Says Sudarshan: "It is this mutual competition that has been our strength. Each company has to stand on its own feet."

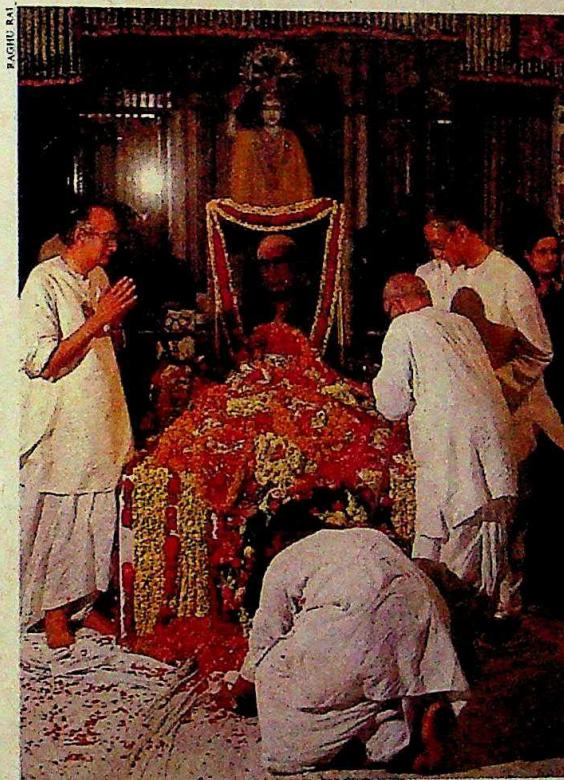
Even in the companies that GD ran personally—Hindustan Aluminium (Hindalco, sales: Rs 186.98 crore) and Mysore Cements (sales: Rs 17.82 crore) are two examples—the transition had been smoothly planned by bringing in a second line of command. So it was only natural that soon after GD's death, one grandson, Aditya, should assume charge of Hindalco, while another, Sudarshan, would get charge of Mysore Cements. In a third company, Gwalior Rayon—which is the single largest company in the group with sales of Rs 294.59 crore—Aditya had been inducted as chairman even before GD died.

In fact, the last such transition took place a few weeks before GD's death, when Jiyajeerao Cotton Mills (sales: Rs 99.37 crore) was given to Sudarshan. There is still some uncertainty over who will get Saurashtra Chemicals, (a major producer of soda ash), but it hardly seemed likely that the group would split over this relatively minor issue.

Ashok Birla, GD's grandnephew, says the real secret of the family continuing to hold together lies in the free room that GD gave for each member of the family to run his own business affairs. "In any major family, if centralisation of management goes on for too long, there is a possibility of dissension since somebody down the line is bound to think differently. So to avoid friction it has evolved that decentralisation has taken place almost automatically. We must be unique in that there is no dissatisfaction even though four generations of Birlas have worked together in industry."

Ashok Birla points to a second reason why it is in the interest of no one in the family to break away: "The main thing is that we draw on the group's strength in terms of the image of the Birlas, rather than on the material strength."

**Complex Structure:** But the group is also held together by more tangible forces: the intricate structure of cross-holdings of shares that bind the group companies together. Ganga Prasad Birla, BM's only son, argues that this is more a matter of historical evolution rather than planned strategy. Durga Prasad Mandelia, G.D. Birla's long-time associate, says one reason for the cross-holding structure was the fact that companies floating new ventures often had to turn to sister companies for raising

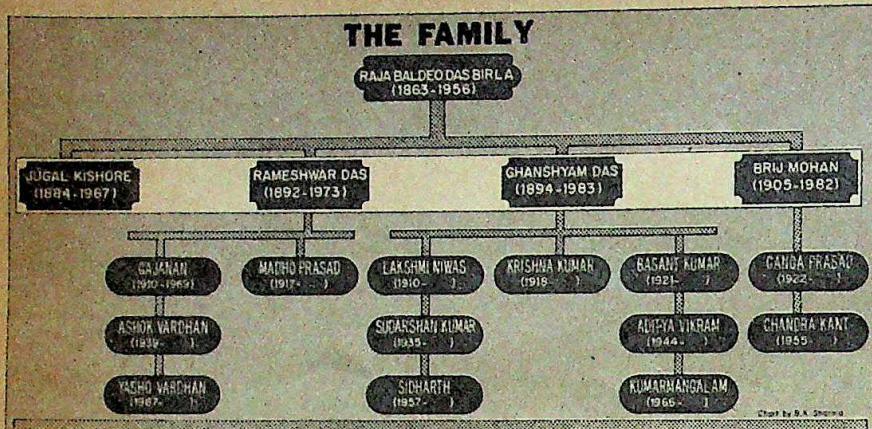


Family mourners pay homage: binding ties

ponsibility of only a few companies that were especially dear to him. We have been running our own companies, and went to my father only when we felt the need for his advice."

**Competitive Companies:** That sentiment is echoed by other members of the family, who also point out that many Birla companies have often been engaged in fiercely competitive battles in the market-place. Sudarshan Birla, LN's son, says his company Universal Electrics (sales: Rs 16.25 crore)\* had once beaten a rival family firm, Electronic Construction and Equipment (ECE) com-

\*All figures 1982 or latest available



finance. Thus, Century Spinning (with sales of Rs 147.20 crore and controlled by Basant Kumar Birla, GD's youngest son) holds substantial shares in many group companies, including Zuari Agro-Chemicals (which has sales of Rs 118.12 crore and is controlled by BK's elder brother Krishna Kumar Birla). And Gwalior Rayon, run by BK's son Aditya, has substantial holdings in Mysore Cements, which will now go to Sudarshan Birla, his first cousin.

Control of companies within the family is often divorced from ownership of shares, but K.K. Birla points out that any clean break would involve selling shares at today's high prices, involving substantial payments of capital gains tax, apart from other complications. "It is not easy, even if someone wants to, and I don't think it is going to happen," says K.K. Birla.

Nevertheless, there has been persistent talk within the business community of jealousies having been fanned by GD's deliberate partiality for his youngest son BK and grandson Aditya. Said one industrialist in Calcutta who did not want to be identified: "I know that KK is bitter about the fact that he has not got any of GD's major companies. Gwalior, Century, Hindalco and Kesoram, which are the biggest companies in the group, have all gone to BK and Aditya, while KK has got nothing."

**Group Spokesman:** K.K. Birla declines any comment on the issue of GD's favouritism, but admits: "I have heard of this talk of favouritism." But Mandelia says: "It was felt by him (GD) and I also felt this that Aditya Birla had imbibed GD's nature and qualities." Nevertheless, K.K. Birla explains away the imbalance in asset transfers by referring obliquely to the fact that he has no sons and therefore no direct line of succession. "My father had in fact offered me a place on the Gwalior board in 1970 or 1971. But I told him there was no point in my coming in for a short period, as this would only create instability in the company."

Yet another potentially disgruntled member of the family is Ashok Birla (*see box*). But his comments on the subject are disarming. "Inheritance is not half as much fun as creating something yourself.... It doesn't really matter if your threshold level when you start is Rs 100 crore or Rs 500 crore. If at the end of the day the aim is to build something for yourself, then it doesn't really matter whether you start big or small."

Though less important as an industrialist than B.K. Birla and his son Aditya, K.K. Birla will in all probability find that the mantle of his father as group spokesman and figurehead falls on him. Technically, it is his older brother, L.N. Birla, who is now the seniormost member of the family. But LN is retiring by nature, and more interested in charitable activities than industry. As R.C. Maheshwari, chief executive of Texmaco, explains, "KK is the identifiable public figure, he has good contacts in the Government, and without a son he is in a position to play a dispassionate role in family matters that come up."

B.K. Birla himself emphasises the role that K.K. Birla has been playing: "He knows the prime minister quite well, and every important Central minister. This is something that is useful to all of us."

**I**F THE family is confident that it will not fall apart, will GD's passing make a difference to the group's record of growth and diversification? Once again, the answer would seem to be in the negative.

For one thing, as industrialist Gouri Prasad Goenka says: "GD built from scratch. He displayed entrepreneurship in a difficult situation, which is why I say there is only one G.D. Birla. But once the foundation is laid, then others can build on it." Sudarshan Birla complements that point by saying: "We have already been running our companies independently, and performance did not necessarily depend on my grandfather's guidance."

## LIFE STYLE

# The Straight And Narrow

AT 26, Sidharth Birla is the youngest member of the Birla clan to be involved in the family business. He is also the only member of the family to have a degree—from Imide in Lausanne, Switzerland, and one of just two who have studied abroad.

Sidharth stresses repeatedly that he is an independent sort of chap. One notable thing about Sidharth is the strictness to which he conforms to the family pattern, observing the personal life code that great grandfather G.D. laid down: don't smoke, don't drink, don't eat non-vegetarian food, go to bed early, switch off the lights when leaving room, cultivate regular habits. Parties are strong: every time Sidharth goes to Calcutta on a business trip, no matter how brief, he must call on every member of the family—before and after the trip.

The departures from family tradition are significant for their timing: almost every Birla goes for an early morning constitutional, but Sidharth prefers a game of squash; while G.D. preferred classical music, and Sidharth's father Sudarshan likes Beethoven's Dvorak, Sidharth prefers rock.

But through the general uniformity of family conduct, individual personalities do show through. Sidharth's grandfather L.N. Birla (GD's eldest son) was a poet with 14 books to his credit, including one on the folklore of Rajasthan, also a horticulturist and one-time president of the Horticulture Society of India. LN's youngest brother, BK, is a collector of art and has a formidable collection which he has gifted to the Academy of Art and Culture, a collection that he values at Rs 10 crore. His daughter Jayashree Mohta was almost solely responsible for bringing Rodin's collection to Calcutta, where she was pestering the French ambassador in Delhi till he consented.

**Religious Bent:** Quite a number of the Birlas have veered towards religion: Jugal Kishore, GD's eldest brother, devoted the second half of his life almost exclusively to building temples and organising charity. That interest is now shared by LN's son, first cousin G.P. Birla, who also emphasises his work in vocational training and rural upliftment. GD himself took a personal interest in developing the national monolith at Pilani.

For all their conservatism today,

Birlas were in the community, following the abolition of slavery, ending a long period with elaborate dowries. Even today, they are grateful to B.M. Kothari. "Earlier that last three days down to courage everyone... The dowry, and uncle... against this country three days while he put on..."

Many Birlas marry relatively late, a fetish among families, only at the age of 25. He comes from a traditional working-class background, most of them married and neither law nor business busy working activity—omes, sch...



Birlas were once radical social reformers in the tradition-bound Marwari community. GD was nearly an outcast following his stout espousal of causes like abolishing the veil and educating women, ending early marriage and doing away with elaborate social and religious rituals. Even today many Marwari businessmen are grateful for these contributions. Says B.M. Khaitan of MacNeill & Magor: "Earlier we used to have marriage rituals that lasted 40 days. The Birlas cut this down to just one day. No one else had the courage to break with the tradition, but everyone else soon followed the Birlas."

The Birlas also took a stand against dowry. GP recalled that his father BM and uncle GD spoke out repeatedly against this custom. But K.K. Birla, who has three daughters but no sons, says that while he gave no dowry to his daughters he put chunks of shares in their names.

**Marriage Alliances:** The Birlas still marry relatively early, and seem to make a fetish about not arranging marital alliances with other prominent industrial families. Says G.P. Birla: "We look mainly at the boy's qualities, and ensure that he comes from a good family with good traditions. The boy should be hard-working and able to get ahead." Thus, most of the Birla daughters have been married into obscure business families, and neither the daughters nor the sons-in-law are allowed a say in the family business. But most of the Birla wives are busy with some form of public activity—running hospitals, nursing homes, schools and centres for women.

Conservative to a fault in their views on education, the family did not boast of a graduate till the 1960's when Aditya graduated from St Xavier's, Calcutta. Till GD's generation, there was virtually no formal education. The next generation did go to college but stopped short at the intermediate level. GD's youngest son BK was keen to do his graduation, but GD ruled this out as impossible.

Initially, the family preferred the nationalistic Presidency College in Calcutta to the Jesuit influences of St Xavier's. Later, when Presidency became a hotbed of leftist student politics, the Jesuits quickly became the lesser evil. Sudarshan, Aditya, Chandrakant and Sidharth all went to St Xavier's.

Only two members of the family have studied abroad: Sidharth for his MBA and before him Aditya at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he did a course in chemical engineering. Aditya's father, BK, recalls the anxiety he had about Aditya being exposed to foreign influences and about being able to manage without a personal man-servant waiting on him hand and foot. But other senior Birlas have more fundamental doubts about prolonged studies. Says G.P. Birla: "While ultimately it should be left to the boy to decide whether he needs training abroad, my experience shows that it is much more useful to actually learn the trade from the shop floor level and then come up." Dismissing arguments about the value of formal education in management, he asks: "Did GD or BM have any formal

education?" The result: GP's son Chandrakant joined the family business on the shop floor of Hindustan Motors soon after doing his B.A.

**Moral Codes:** The strict family codes have had their impact on the Birla business as well. Sudarshan Birla says this is the reason why there is no Birla venture in hoteliering (because non-vegetarian food would have to be served) or leather. B.K. Birla had in fact once referred to hoteliering as a "morally lax" business. But such scruples did not come in the way of the family trading in opium eight decades ago.

Only two Birlas have so far had a taste for public life: GD himself, well known for his role in the freedom movement, and his second son KK—who first fought the Lok Sabha election in Jhunjhunu constituency in 1971 (over GD's opposition but with BM's support) and then the Rajya Sabha election from Uttar Pradesh in 1974, losing both times.

The biggest problem the Birlas now face is in continuing the family bloodline. In GD's generation there were four Birlas, of whom one was childless. Of the six male Birlas in the next generation one is childless and a second has no sons, leaving only four Birlas in the third generation, of which again one is childless. That leaves just three male members of the family in the fourth generation, one of whom is married and so far has no son, only a daughter. Is there a fatal flaw in the genes that have helped the Birlas build this vast industrial empire?

—T.N. NINAN with SUMANTA SEN



The Birla clan in full strength: the tradition continues

GD's intervention could, however, be quite effective. Sudarshan recalls an instance when he thought he faced a problem in selling his product. When he posed the problem to his grandfather, GD flabbergasted him by saying that his problem was not selling but production. Says Sudarshan: "I was so surprised. I thought I could produce all that I could sell. But my grandfather said that if I increased production I would be able to cut my costs, and then selling would not be a problem. He was right. I did increase production by 30 to 40 per cent, and faced no problem in selling at the lower price."

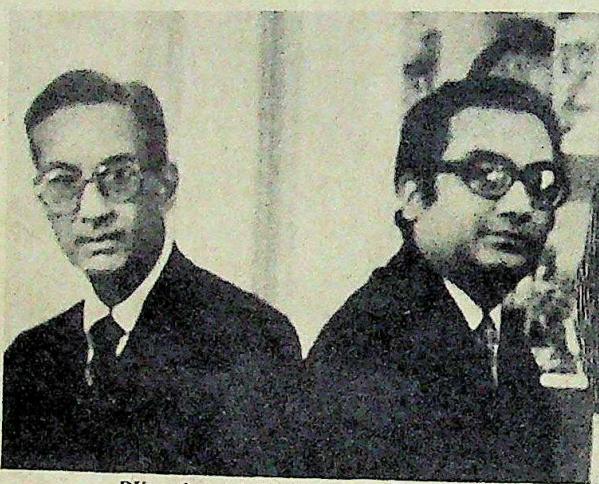
On other occasions, however, GD's opposition to industrial schemes was ignored. B.K. Birla recalls an instance two years ago when his son Aditya wanted to issue convertible debentures for Indian Rayon (sales: Rs 61.7 crore). "My father was opposed to the idea, because he felt this would reduce the family holding in the company from 18 per cent to something lower than that, and that we would be risking our control of the company. But Aditya said that he wanted to expand his operations, and could not get money any other way. So despite my father's opposition, and in fact his anger at the proposal, Aditya went ahead."

**Successful System:** But the real reason for the general confidence in the Birlas' ability to build on their existing empire is the fact that the family's business culture and systems are well set, most of them having been conceived by G.D. Birla and made a part of the essence of the group's operations. Naaz Rovshen, director of the consultancy firm Ferguson Associates, argues that "While a Tata success would seem to depend on the individual who is in charge of a particular company, a Birla success appears to me to depend entirely on the system and how well it is administered."

At the heart of this "system" is the now legendary *partha* system of daily budgeting and reporting. In almost every Birla company, the member of the family in charge gets a report of the previous day's production, sales, inventories, cash flow position, and profit or loss. This is compared each time with norms relating to inputs, consumption of materials and profits to identify deviations from the optimum. As Siddharth Birla explains: "This system has many advantages. Essentially it emphasises the speed of reporting, even sacrificing some accuracy in the process. So there is mental pressure on the manager to perform daily. It is a very short reaction time. Then, costs are very carefully monitored, there can be no fiddling of

the accounts, and the law is laid down that if there is trouble contact the boss straightforwardly."

G.P. Birla says the system started because of the financial problems of the depression years: "Money was tight, credit was not easily available, and you had to worry about money more than anything else." But the value of the system survives. As Rovshen says: "This is a tremendous self-policing system which acts as a motivating force on the manager who is on the spot." It is also something of a system unique to the Birlas, with even rival businessmen like Gouri Goenka admitting that their own reporting systems are far less rigorous.



BK and son Aditya: GD's favourites

Consequently, though some of the younger members of the family have their doubts about the continuing validity of the *partha* system, and see the need for at least adapting the system to current needs, they have all been taught the prime importance of monitoring financial performance. Says Sudarshan Birla: "The *partha* system is not a static or hidebound system. It is adapted to changing needs. And we have found that the basic principles work very well."

Rovshen identifies three other factors that lie at the heart of the Birlas' success. "One is the fact that rewards are very good. In effect, they are giving the man on the spot tremendous responsibility, turning him loose to run a unit, monitoring his performance on a daily basis and then rewarding him generously for good performance. A second is that they demand and get 100 per cent loyalty from senior staff in what is virtually an extension of the joint family system into the corporate world. I doubt if this is done as effectively in any other group. And the last is that they have their finger squarely on the pulse of markets, demand and opportunities."

The younger Birlas have been trained

into these business traditions and have acquired some of GD's ability to pick and loyal men to man their key units. One confidant of the family: "GD used to say that he did not employ men bought them for life." The most reliable never been retired, the best example D.P. Mandelia, who started with GD at age of 14 and is today 76, and still in charge of Central India Machinery Manufacturing Corporation (CIMMC) -Rs 34.83 crore—and as adviser to him continues to run the company.

**Loyalty Tradition:** Family loyalty have been actively encouraged. Mandelia's son, S.P. Mandelia, now after Century Rayon, and a long-time family associate Dhar Dalmia has benefited the fact that his sons have been appointed agents for Birla mills.

This tradition continues. When Aditya Birla was setting to create a new unit for him in the mid-1960s, he was encouraged to pick his own men, so that the start their loyalty would be with him. As father B.K. Birla said: "I did not want to give him men, as they would have been constantly looking over their shoulders towards me. And I must say, he has picked an excellent team."

This stability in family business traditions has been commented by the creation of satellite groups which Rovshen terms the extension of the joint family system. S.N. Hada was executive of Kesoram Cotton (sales: Rs 112.1 crore) but now owns some textile units of his own. R.K. Kanoria was a business partner early on, but is now an industrialist in his own right. The same goes for Rajgharia, who was chief executive of Maco (sales: Rs 50.39 crore) but now has industries of his own in paper and casting. Even sharebroking firms have long associations with the Birlas, one example being the broking firm Chimanlal and Company in Bombay. Says B.M. Tan of MacNeill and Magor: "Unlike others they have never been interested in hogging the whole cake themselves. Today there are about 20 millionaires in the country who grew up because of help and advice from the older Birlas."

**Individual Achievements:** For all the stability of these business traditions, how the different members of the family have their own business styles and achievements—and many of them are impressive enough to ensure that the Birlas will continue to well without G.D. Birla. Each member

POLYESTER

PHAGWARA

SAREES



Not a word spoken,  
yet so much said.

They call it style.

GATJIT COTTON TEXTILE MILLS LIMITED, PHAGWARA, PUNJAB

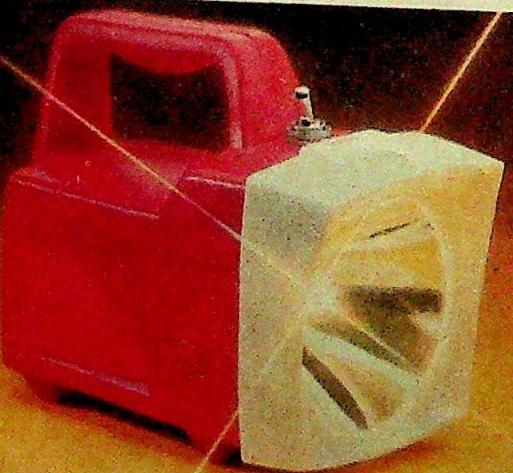
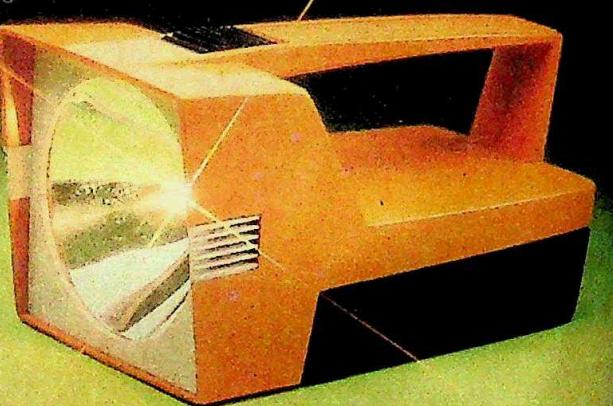
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# EVEREADY 500 LANTERN

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## EVEREADY COMET

The space age lantern



## EVEREADY COMMANDER

A beam so bright  
it can match  
a car headlight



Eveready Lanterns. The long-light brigade

He was initially given one or two units, he had to build from that base. L.N. GD's eldest son, has been unlucky in respect, because his major units in coal, zinc and copper were nationalised, a starch unit in Burma—the family's overseas venture dating back to the 1930s—had to be sold out because of trouble conditions in Burma. His brother K.K. has been able to build Texmaco into a major engineering enterprise, venture into shipping by first buying India Steamship (sales: Rs 47.48 crore) in the 1960s and then setting up Ratnakar Shipping (sales: Rs 20.20 crore) and finally start the successful fertiliser company, Zuari Agro-Chemicals.

The most successful record, however, belongs to the third brother, B.K. Birla, who launched his companies on major diver-

sification plans in order to spread risks. He developed Century Spinning from a single textile unit into a large conglomerate with interests in rayon, cement and tyre yarn. Kesoram, similarly, has moved out from being a textile unit and now has a refractory plant, a spun pipes division and also produces cement and rayon. Jayshree Tea (sales: Rs 46.59 crore) has moved out from tea into plywood and chemicals.

B.K.'s cousin M.P. Birla has similarly diversified the operations of his Birla Jute, taking on rayon, chemicals and cement.

B.M. Birla's son, Ganga Prasad, has a dazzling track record in Africa, where he is constantly in demand for either setting up new units or managing ventures on behalf of their owners. His activities in that continent now include running four paper mills in three

countries, setting up a 1.3 million-tonne steel plant that is expected to double soon to 2.6 million tonnes, and running asbestos plants in Nigeria as well as in Scotland.

**Impressive Record:** Aditya has an almost comparable track record in Southeast Asia, where he has set up no fewer than 10 new companies—in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand. Aditya, at home, took charge of Indian Rayon when it was a sick unit and nursed it into a company that is now highly fancied on the stock market, the share price now ruling at around 20 times the levels that existed when Aditya took charge.

Aditya's cousin, Chandrakant, G.P. Birla's son, has yet to start his own units, but observers have been impressed by the manner in which he has assumed charge of as

## REBELS

## The Other Birlas

**T**HE YEAR was 1946, the place Multan. Thirty-six-year-old Gajanan Birla, already a husband and father, met a young graduate Sumitra Grover. It was love at first sight. With the help of a mutual friend, they were married a month later.

Gajanan, the elder son of GD's brother R.D. Birla, was already a rebel in the family before his second marriage—and that too was outside the community. In a clan of strict teetotallers, he liked his alcohol. And in a community where business was all (as first cousin K.K. Birla recalls today), Gajanan showed little aptitude for money-making. But his marriage to Sumitra, when his first wife was still alive, brought the full wrath of the Birlas upon him. Virtually expelled from the family, and dispossessed of his stake in the family business, Gajanan paid the price for his romance.

Recalling the marriage, Sumitra Birla told INDIA TODAY last fortnight: "I knew he had a wife, but I also knew that he had stopped living with her. And at the time of our marriage he was almost a bachelor." She repeatedly referred to Ashok (Gajanan's son by his first wife) as "my eldest son", and her own son Madhukar said: "I have good relations with Ashok." Asked whether they meet often, Madhukar said, "No, but that is because we live in different cities."

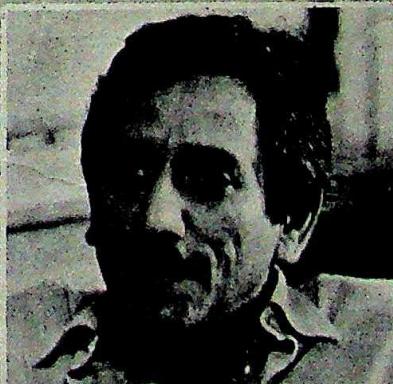
How good are their relations with the rest of the family? Neither Sumitra nor Madhukar would say anything beyond "we meet each other". And asked whether he had received any help from them in running his business (tea wa-



Gajanan Birla: paying the price

rehouses and a computerised data processing centre), Madhukar said: "I would not like to comment on that."

There is a stony silence about what Gajanan did after being cut off from the family. Though some of the other Birlas maintained that Gajanan continued to



Ashok Birla: different

have his office in the Birla headquarters in Calcutta and that he "was given his share", Sumitra and son Madhukar insist that they "would not know" about this. Madhukar explains his ignorance by saying, "I was barely 10 when he died (in 1969). So I would not know what his relationships were with the rest of the family." But the impression gets across that they do not want to say anything which might embarrass the family.

**Tactful Silence:** Even if Gajanan had been bitter about the treatment he got, his wife and children insist that he "never expressed his bitterness, and we had a very happy life". They talk of the fact that he was an avid golfer and tennis player, and that he played for India against Italy in 1933. The only hint of continued tension comes from eldest daughter Gita Sanghi, who says: "I am no longer a Birla, and I can say this. Why don't you question the family what they think of this house? After all, Gajanan Birla was the brother of M.P. Birla."

But the problems have not ended with Gajanan. Ashok is even today something of an outsider in the family, though he runs some family concerns. Says L.N. Birla, GD's eldest son and now the seniormost member of the clan: "He is not taken into family councils."

Ashok himself is different. While the rest of the Birlas will not consent to being photographed without coat and tie, Ashok greets visitors in his well-appointed office in Bombay with shirt buttons open. While no one else in the family smokes, Ashok does—in public. And while the rest of the Birlas start the day early, Ashok rushes into office around noon. In a relatively harmless way, Gajanan's willingness to rebel survives in his son.

—SUMANTA SEN

big a company as Hindustan Motors (sales: Rs 304.43 crore), and one Calcutta-based industrialist believes he is the man to watch in future.

Two other cousins, Ashok and Sudarshan, complete the list of third-generation Birlas and provide sufficient evidence that

there are no dunderheads in their group. Taking charge of New Swadeshi Mills (sales: Rs 34.22 crore) when it was making losses, Ashok has wiped out these losses and started a modernization programme. In a second unit, Zenith (sales: Rs 50.77 crore), Ashok has diversified operations to bring in a rol-

ling mill and paper unit, and is now into cement, while also setting up a crore viscose fibre plant in Indonesia in the future. Ashok plans to install additional cement capacity, and to move into hi-technology electronics industries, including computers, software and television picture

## CONTROVERSIES

## Riding The Storm

**F**EW INDUSTRIAL houses have been dogged by as much controversy as the Birlas. The Industrial Licensing Policy Inquiry Committee (ILPIC) was appointed in the 1960s following charges that the Birlas and others had been using the licensing system to corner licences. Later, the Sarkar Commission was appointed to inquire into the group's affairs. The commission was to give its report in a year; but dogged by law suits and non-cooperation, it dragged itself out for nine years before the Government finally abolished it—without any report being submitted.

The Janata government, under industry minister George Fernandes, threatened to nationalise Gwalior Rayon for violation of licensing formalities—a subject which IILPIC had gone into. Some of the evidence which turned up then concerned the cornering of licensed capacity in rayon manufacture, and the attempts by the Birlas to "scuttle" the projects of rival companies.

**Controversial Venture:** Hindustan Aluminium has been another controversial venture. To start with, aluminium was reserved for the public sector, and the National Industrial Development Corporation (NIDC) was asked to go ahead on two aluminium ventures. The French company Pechiney was asked to come and study bauxite reserves and work out proposals to set up the two plants.

Overnight, however, and without the NIDC or Pechiney knowing anything about it, the Birlas were given permission to go ahead with their own aluminium project in collaboration with Kaisers. Commenting on this, the IILPIC report said: "The decision in principle to permit Birlas to set up the plant based on Rihand power seems to have been taken before any application from the Birlas was received, and the decision was maintained in spite of difficulties that were later observed regarding the conditions under which Birlas were able to develop the project."

Even after Hindalco's plant was

commissioned, the company continued to run into periodic storms in Parliament and the Uttar Pradesh Assembly over the concessional power rates that it had ne-

*Charges of pollution have been levied against not one or two but five Birla factories, with fish and cattle dying and crops withering because of factory effluents.*

gotiated with the Uttar Pradesh State Electricity Board.

**Pollution:** A quite different kind of controversy has cropped up repeatedly in the case of Birla ventures: industrial pollution. This has happened in not one or two, but in five Birla factories: Zuari Agro-Chemicals in Goa, Orient Paper Mills at Amlai in Madhya Pradesh, Gwalior Rayon's units at Nagda, also in the same state, and at Mavoor in Kerala, and the Harihar polyfibres unit in Karnataka.

Within three months of the Zuari fertiliser plant being commissioned in Goa, fish began to die. Within a year, cattle also were dying. And in another year, coconut trees began to wither away. The pollution had been anticipated and warned against, but the plant authorities had claimed credit for an effluent treatment plant. Finally, the plant had to be closed down on the orders of the Government of Goa, and a part of the production process changed in order to end the use of arsenic—which had been causing the poisoning.

In the Orient Paper case, similarly, there had been advance warnings of pollution of the Sone river, and as in Goa, corrective action followed only after public protests over dying fish and cattle. Independent study teams found that milk

yields in the area had gone down, and the incidence of food infections had gone up. In the third case, at Mavoor, Chaliyar river saw fish dying and infections spreading, while crops withered. Company promises, made in 1966, to discharge effluents into the river through a 20-km pipeline were forgotten.

**Public Protests:** Over a decade later, the Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad reported that "the present arrangement for the treatment of the effluents is absolutely inadequate". Finally, mounting public protest forced Gwalior Rayon to lay an effluent pipeline. But the pipeline was leaking, and as late as 1981, the State Water Pollution Control Board sued the company. Later, the Kerala High Court passed severe strictures against the company.

More recently, there have been protests of Gwalior Rayon's unit at Nagda always been emitting toxic gases, which apparently have been causing severe health problems for the workers in the plant.

Members of the Birla family tend to defend their pollution record, arguing on the grounds that most of the charges of pollution belong to the past, and that they have transferred taken more steps than anyone else to control pollution. G.P. Birla, who is driving force behind Orient Paper, says that experts of today's K.R. Rao have inspected Amlai in recent times and cleared the plant of pollution charges. Brij Mohan and that his paper mill in Kenya (which follows the UN Environment Programme guidelines) is considered a model in pollution control.

K.K. Birla similarly defends Zuari's record, saying that he went to great trouble and expense to change his plant's process in order to end the pollution problem. He asserts: "No one has done more than we have to control pollution."

What neither member of the family mentions is that these were done when they had no further choice in the matter and after prolonged public outcry. Indeed, the villagers around Amlai complain that even today the Sone water is red, and that there are no fish in the effluent-treated water. A study sponsored by the People's Union for Civil Liberties reported last fortnight that 15 workers had died and 27 paralysed last year.

Sudarshan already has charge of some units, including Jiyajeerao, OCM, Shree Jay Woollen Mills, Mysore Cements and Universal Electrics. Clearly, there is room for everyone to grow and expand.

THESE complementing styles and purposes are in part a replay of the different roles played by G.D. Birla and his three brothers in the early part of this century. L.N. Birla's counterpart then was his eldest brother Jugil Kishore, who after a brief foray into the family business soon grew to concentrate on religious and charitable activities.

The second brother, Rameshwaradas, was a financier *par excellence*. Basing himself in Bombay, R.D. Birla soon got into the entire money market company, share brokers, insurance company and other influential sections of the country's commercial world. In times of inflation, raising money for projects was not easy. But the R.D. had his pulse on the market, and as early as 1981, also masterminded the group's first major acquisitions—many of which eventually led to management takeovers. Century Spinning is the most outstanding example of this, though the Birlas have been keen to emphasise that there has always been a time gap between such apparent ownership and management control problems, the latter taking place only if the former did badly. Says B.K. Birla: "My family tends to be always against contested takeovers on the market. His entire emphasis was on creating new assets, not on transferring ownership."

While GD himself was the visionary, Birla, who could drive force, he was the forerunner of today's K.K. Birla in the role that experts will play in public life, while the fourth generation chairman, Brij Mohan Birla, conceived the schemes for moving into crucial areas of engineering—into automobiles, successively in pollution control and into steel, unsuccessfully.

**Weaknesses:** For all their successes and strengths, however, the group has its obvious weaknesses as well, and this is quite apart from the fact that its business saga is far from being a morality play. The Birlas encourage a culture that the Birlas often proved cloying and unacceptable to the more thoroughbred professionals, and too many of their units have fallen sick for it to be an unsullied record. Many of the failures been in consumer products, in areas where marketing skills were called for, or where quality was crucial. Family members at these weaknesses, with Sudarshan admitting that "quality complaints are unknown."

In cycle manufacture, the group's Hind

Cycles was left behind by rivals like Atlas and Hero and was soon taken over by the Government. In jams and squashes, the group's Tims products are virtually unknown, being swamped by rival products from Kisan Products and Herbertsons (Dipy's). In confectionary, Mortons (a division of one of the group's sugar companies) is once again an also-ran, as is ECE in lifts. The group's recent record in newspaper and magazine publishing is also far from encouraging—three publications have closed down in recent years.

**Remarkable Initiative:** But in hard core industrial areas, their dynamism remains undiminished. Though licensing has been a problem since the group was branded as a monopoly house, ingenuity has not been at a

standstill. One example of youth being given its head is Sidharth, 26, GD's great grandson who decided to launch his own plastics company recently. "I wanted to do it on my own, so I did not even tell anyone that I was trying to float a new project. I told them only after everything had been tied up." Sidharth's Rs 4 crore project, Xpro India, is expected to take off shortly and produce plastic films and sheets.

**Marketing Strategies:** Sidharth's contemporary is his uncle Chandrakant, 28, who is getting ready to launch his own projects, starting with a million-tonne cement plant in Andhra Pradesh. Says Chandrakant: "This project has taught me all the difficulties in getting something done. You have to get a licence, get the land, arrange for finance, learn

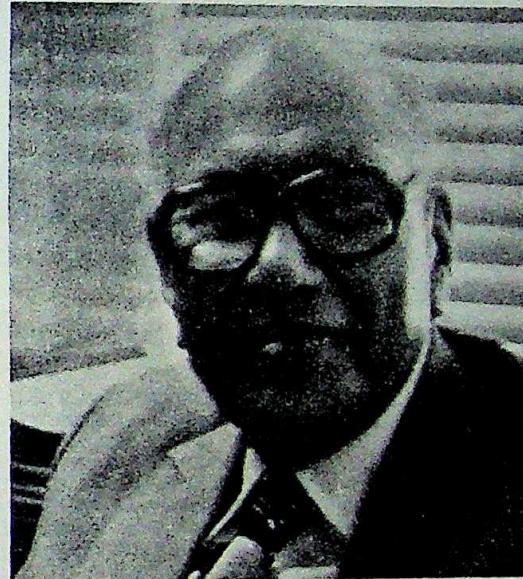
to negotiate with suppliers, and finally implement the project."

Chandrakant also recognises that the group's relative weak point, marketing, is gaining in importance. "We have started giving this more importance over the last couple of years, because major changes are taking place in Indian industry. In almost every sphere, there is now far more competition than before. In bearings, there were only three or four producers before; now there are eight. Earlier, there were just two companies in the field of shovels, now there are five. Similarly in asbestos, the number of manufacturers has gone up from two to nine. And in cars, the market has come alive because of Maruti. So we are updating our product and have started a major dealer development campaign. In all the areas where we are operating, marketing has become crucial for success."

Ashok Birla, though slightly older than Sidharth and Chandrakant, is himself consciously planning an entry into the fields that will get him into a position to be on top in the next decade. His emphasis on computers, software servicing, micro-hydel manufacture and TV tube production are all aimed at the future. Says Ashok: "I am planning today for the 1990s marketplace when the boom really catches up with us."

Many rival industrialists even today tend to dismiss the Birlas' growth record as being largely a creation of the relative *laissez-faire* era of the 1940s and 1950s—when most of the group's major companies were launched. But the recent track record of the younger Birlas would seem to emphasise the fact that the basic strength of the group, then as now, has been to spot the opportunity that presents itself, or to create one, and then go for it.

T.N. NINAN with CHANDER UDAY SINGH and SUMANTA SEN



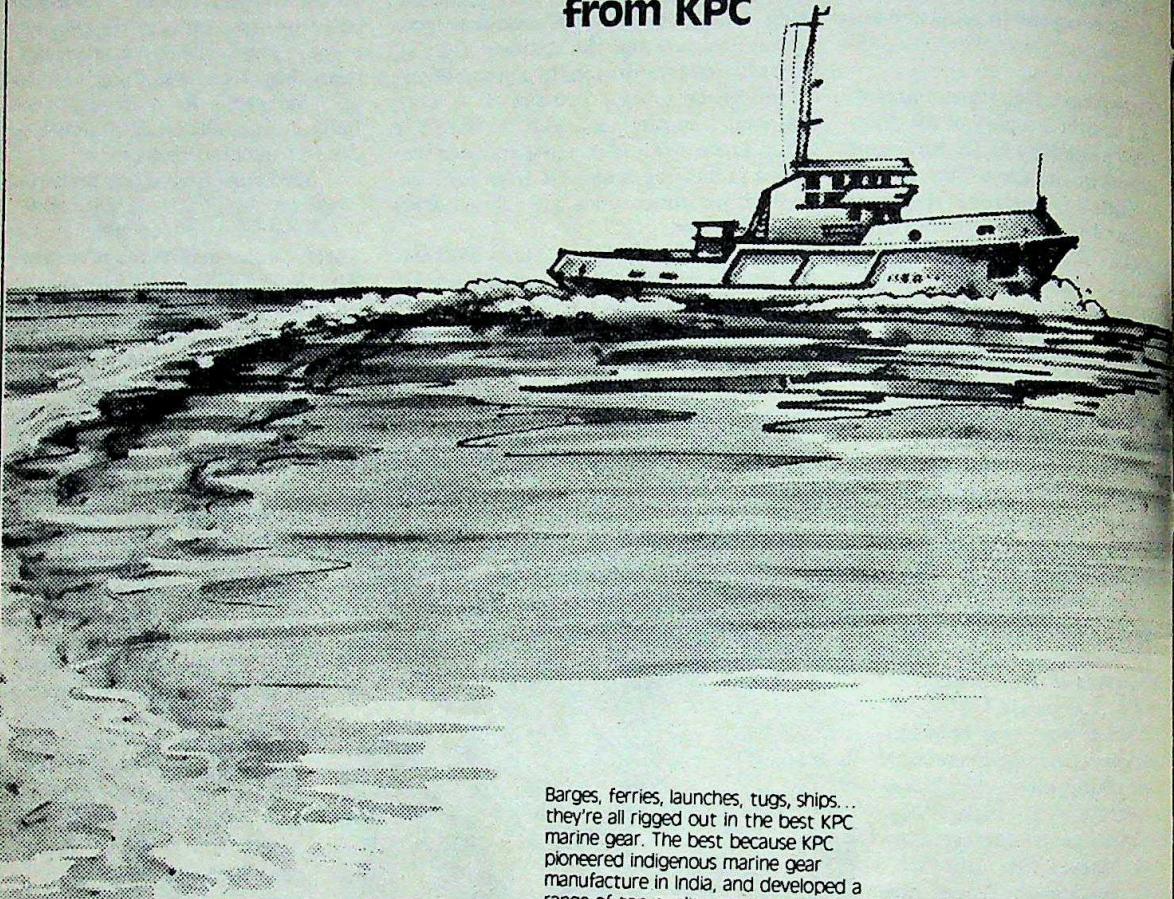
Mandelia: right-hand man

premium. One successful stratagem has been to render invisible the umbilical cord tying many units to the parent group, so that they could then deny that they were Birla companies. Many Birla companies no longer have Birlas on their boards, but trusted executives look after their fortunes.

Another strategy to get past the licensing hurdles has been to team up with the state Government-sponsored industrial development corporations to bag licences that were earlier refused to the group. Two recent examples are caustic (with the Bihar State Industrial Development Corporation) and fluorine (with its Tamil Nadu counterpart). Both are raw materials needed by Hindalco. A third instance is that of Ashok Birla teaming up with a Punjab state sector company to manufacture TV picture tubes.

Not all such initiatives depended on G.D. Birla. Indeed, D.P. Mandelia thinks that the future should see even more dyna-

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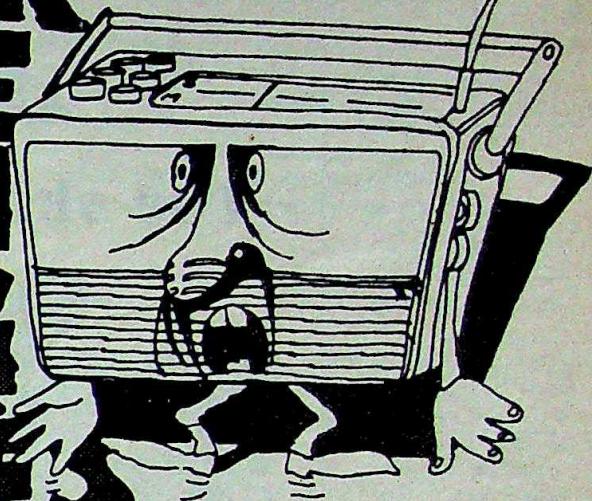
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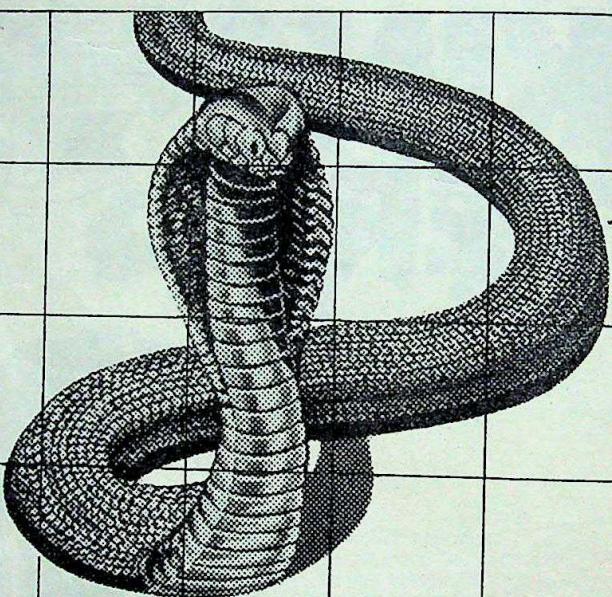
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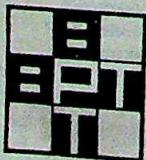
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## TYPEWRITER TIE-UPS

**A** TYPEWRITER revolution is about to overtake the country, with virtually every manufacturer planning a belated switch from mechanical to electric and electronic typewriters in the next couple of years.

The public sector Hindustan Teleprinters has tied up with Olivetti of Italy for an electric typewriter. Remington Rand, the market leader, has dropped its earlier proposal to tie up with Triumph Adler of Germany for an electric typewriter, and has now decided on a new electronic model in collaboration with a sister company in Brazil that is a part of Sperry Rand's global network. Godrej too is changing its technology, while some new entrants are already in the market with electronic typewriters—one of them in collaboration with Hermes of Switzerland. Yet another new entrant will be Continental Device India Ltd, a Delhi-based electronics company that plans to launch its operations in this field with an electric typewriter.

## RE MILEAGE

THE TYRE industry is likely to get a fresh gift package from the Government—new tyre units are expected to be allowed 60 per cent excise concession for a specified number of units. Only a few months ago, the Government had raised the concession rate from 30 to 50 per cent—which itself marked a new level of generosity in fiscal hand-outs. While it is not yet clear which units will be able to claim benefits under this scheme, the betting is on Gram Industries and Cotton Mills—which belongs to the Birlas as well as on Raunaq Singh's Apollo Tyres and the Singhania group's J.K. Industries. Modi Rubber too may be able to claim this benefit for its expansion programme, which is already under way. In the last decade, the tyre industry has been known for tax benefits that have helped select units to prosper, and the latest bonanza is seen as some tyre companies as a further step in this direction.

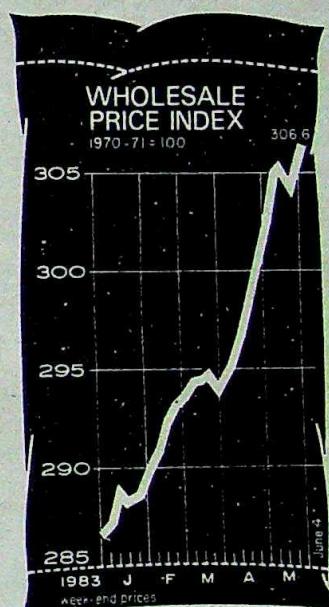
## TEL DEAL

**A**HINDRA Ugine is tying up with the state sector Industrial Promotion and Investment Corporation of Orissa Ltd (IPICOL) to set up a Rs 40-crore 25,000-tonne stainless steel plant in Orissa. The two partners in the joint venture are expected to contribute 25 and 26 per cent respectively of the share capital, and the balance 49 per cent will be thrown open for public subscription. The project is notable for the new stainless steel technology it uses—involved charge chrome as raw material instead of the usual low-chrome ferro chrome. Orissa has a plentiful supply of chrome ore reserves, which are mined by the Orissa Mining Corporation. Charge chrome is already manufactured in India by the Indian Metals and Ferro Alloys Corporation, but most of the production is currently being exported. The new project, with its novel process, will thus provide charge chrome with a new application and market in India.

## BLICITY BONANZA

VERSEAS consumer product companies are emerging as major advertisers in the Indian press. Casio of Japan, for instance, was the biggest advertiser of electronic calculators during 1982, accounting for roughly half the total advertising expenditure by all calculator manufacturers put together, and well ahead of the second biggest advertiser, the Tata company Nelco. According to figures compiled by a domestic research organisation, Casio spent estimated Rs 26 lakh while Nelco spent no more than Rs 1.5 lakh. Chinese watch companies and western cigarette manufacturers who concentrate on the Malayalam press because of its large readership in Asia, are other major advertisers.

## ALARMING TREND



**P**RICES have continued their upward sweep in recent weeks, and are doing so at a speed that has set alarm bells ringing in the Finance Ministry and the Reserve Bank. This is explained partly as being a seasonal factor—prices normally tend to go up from early in the year till around the end of August, when they start easing off—but this year's rise has been particularly pronounced in recent weeks. In the last five months, wholesale prices have climbed over 7 per cent despite slack industrial activity and what the Government claims has been a record rabi harvest of wheat. Consumer price indices have meanwhile risen in an unbroken arc for over a year. A comparable situation in 1981 saw the Government crack down in mid-year with a series of harsh monetary measures that sent prices plunging for the next eight months. However, the economy was pushed into an industrial slide from which it is yet to fully recover.

## SPINNING YARNS

**T**HE NYLON filament yarn industry seems set for an unprecedented expansion of capacity following the clearance by the Government of long-pending industrial applications. Virtually every existing manufacturer has now got the green signal for expanding production capacities—among them Nirlon Synthetic Fibres, Garware Nylons, Modipon, Baroda Rayon, Jagatjit Cotton Textile Mills, Century Enka, Shree Synthetics and J.K. Synthetics. All these have been allowed to expand to a capacity of 6,000 tonnes each. Over and above these, a host of state industrial development corporations have been given letters of intent for setting up new nylon filament yarn plants—among them those of Haryana, Punjab, Karnataka, Gujarat, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal. Yet another new licensee is the Petrofils Cooperative Ltd. In all, nylon filament yarn capacity is scheduled to go up from the region of 30,000 tonnes to one lakh tonnes annually. The industry, ironically, is critical of this licensing spree. Individual capacities are said to be too small, while there will be considerable excess capacity if all the sanctioned units materialise.

**MARWARIS**

# The Great Survivors



A black and white photograph of G.D. Birla, an elderly man with glasses, looking slightly to his left.

I ONCE asked G.D. Birla if he had ever met Keynes, the great economist. We were discussing recession, inflation and other ills which our modern economies are afflicted with from time to time. GD said that he recalled meeting Keynes twice – once in India when he (GD) had deposed before a commission of which Keynes was a member. He had also run into him in the office of a banker in London.

In Calcutta, GD had apparently gone along with a group which consisted mainly of Marwari businessmen. Keynes was interested in the Marwaris as a business community and was curious to know how a community that was only marginally in the picture before World War I was suddenly beginning to make a mark in Calcutta and elsewhere.

**Steady Growth:** If Keynes were alive today—his birth centenary is being celebrated all over the world this year—he would still be wondering what it was that kept the Marwaris on the go more than a century after they launched their great diaspora. For despite their steady growth, first in trade and then in industry, Marwari business houses seem to have lost none of their driving spirit, and their share of the nation's industrial activity continues to be as high as ever.

There are now five business houses—Birla, Singhania, Bangur, Modi and Bajaj—among the top 20 and between them they account for slightly over one third of the total assets. This has been so for the last six years or so. It is, however, possible that in a year or two, the last of the five houses, Bajaj, may be pushed out of the top 20, leaving only four. The Bajaj group has been steadily losing clout and rank—from No. 16 in 1979 to No. 18 in 1980 and No. 20 in 1981. Its nearest competitor is ITC which is rising fast in the company stakes.

The top 20 business houses can be conveniently grouped under four main headings. There is, firstly, the Gujarati-Parsi group, based mainly in Bombay and Ahmedabad which covers six houses among the top 20, namely, Tata, Mafatlal, Associated Cement, Sarabhai, Reliance Textile, and Scindia. Between them they account for 40 per cent of the assets of the top 20. The third major group comprises foreign companies, or multinationals if you like, Imperial Chemicals, Ashok Leyland and Hindustan Lever, which accounts for less than 10 per cent of the assets. The rest of the six business houses, Thapar, Kirloskar, Shri Ram, TVS,

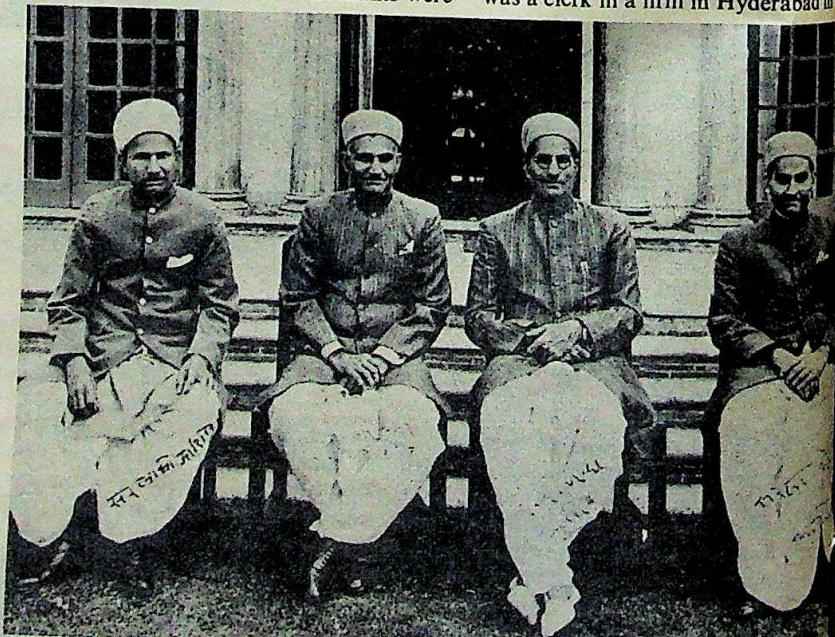
Mahindra & Mahindra and Larsen & Toubro, do not really belong to any group, though the last two are Bombay-based and hew closely to the Gujarati-Parsi line.

**Well-entrenched:** This was not always so. In 1931, for instance, the number of companies controlled by Marwaris was less than 10 out of 510, or about 2 per cent. By 1951, the number had gone up to about 100 (out of 620), or one out of six. In 1964, when the Monopolies Inquiry Commission prepared its first report, Marwari companies were No. 2 after the Gujarati-Parsi group. The position does not seem to have changed very much since then. Some might say that the Marwaris are being kept in their place, but it is really astonishing that a community, no more than a hundred years out of the desert of Shekhawat in Rajasthan, should continue to dominate the Indian industrial scene in the face of such well-entrenched and far more 'modern' communities like the Parsis and Gujaratis of Bombay, and, of course, the multinationals.

The phenomenal rise of the Marwaris as a trading and business community and their takeover of nearly, or possibly more than a half of the country's financial assets, has been described in many books (Thomas Tinberg's *The Marwaris* being one of them). The Marwari diaspora apparently began more than 200 years ago and by early 19th century scores of Marwari merchants were

firmly established in the opium trade in Malwa (near Indore) and the plains of Deccan (not yet subdued by the British). Marwaris started as small shopkeepers, became money-lenders, financing, to begin with, the production of opium and cotton. Many Marwaris, including GD's elder brother Jugal Kishore (JK) made a killing in the highly speculative opium market just before World War I and used the money to go into jute and cotton broking business, then into industry. GD who had gone into business as a broker on his own in 1914, got enough family backing to set up his first jute mill in 1919. He was not the only one. Another Marwari, Sir Sarupchand Hukamchand of Indore cornered the cotton market in Cuttack and is said to have cleared Rs 1 crore in a single year. He too had earlier made his fortune in opium.

Most Marwaris began their careers as clerks with one or other Marwari *gaddis*, the most prominent was a firm called Tarachand & Shyamdas. The firm was established by Poddars of Ramgarh in early 18th century and was active until World War II. It still be active under a different name. This firm spawned many firms as family members set themselves up as brokers on their own. GD's grandfather, Seth Shivnarain was a clerk in a firm in Hyderabad in 1880.



The Birla brothers in Marwari dress circa 1940 (from left): Jugal Kishore, Rameshwardas, GD and Brijmohan



R.P. Goenka



H.S. Singhania



Rahul Bajaj



K.N. Modi

opium trade  
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Calcutta *gaddi* of Tarachand Ghanshyandas. Other Marwari firms, including Hukamchand, Khaitan, Kothari, Poddar etc also entered the market created from this *gaddi* and used its redi-

ed Rs 1 crore in creating, issuing and other services for car-  
rier made  
ing business.

**Rapid Expansion:** From indigenous trading, the Marwaris went on as *banias* or guaranteed brokers to British companies who were in need of intermediates for their business with the 'natives'. Thus they established their contacts in the European community. Goenkars, for instance, were very close to Ralli Brothers, Surjmals, Grahams, and Kanorias to McLeod. They were the only ones who operated more or less independently of European firms, though initially they too were *banias* to those

GD has said that they were akin to the citizens of England in their religious and social habits, and with a strong puritan streak. This is true not only of Birlas but other Marwaris. Birlas, of course, are Puritan, do not drink or smoke, and according to Durga Prasad Mandelia, a veteran of over 60 years—he started working with GD when he (Mandelia) was 26—and GD was 26—are workaholics. The leader of the Modi group, Gujralal Modi, did not permit his brothers and sons to have a night in Delhi on business and they had to report to him in Modinagar every evening. It was only after his death that the children began setting up house in Modinagar and now visit Modinagar only on business.

Nearly every theory of entrepreneurship has been proved wrong by the Marwaris. As Tinberg points out: "The Marwaris, while somewhat behind other elite groups educationally, more conservative socially, and later entrants into industry than the other trading communities, now play a dominant role in the country's industry. The Marwaris are educationally advanced and

sociologically modern, and were one of the first groups to enter industry. They might have been expected to play such a role at least in their own homeland in eastern India, but have today relatively no role in industry at all. This contrast is the exact opposite of what most social theorising on entrepreneurship would lead us to expect."

**Family Ties:** Another crucial point is the role of the joint family in entrepreneurial development. There are some who believe that the individual is constrained and held back by the group. On the other hand, there is some evidence that, at least in the initial stages, joint family may be a useful institution in capital accumulation. Birlas, for instance, manage what is virtually a joint family business, but the brothers and the sons and the nephews live separately and the companies they control are also separate entities. According to Mandelia, GD asked his sons to set up separate households years ago, for he believed that unless a man is a master in his own house, he cannot develop adequately. The Mafatlals in Bombay live in the same building but the brothers have now separated and the companies too have been parcelled out among the brothers. Incidentally, Mafatlals are Patels, not Marwaris.

It is also astonishing that a community as conservative as the Marwaris and one with a dependent status *vis-à-vis* the British should have played such a bold role in the national movement for independence. The financial support of big business in India to the Congress was a matter of a good deal of speculation among the British who often tried to fathom the motives behind it. In a most secret and personal communication to all provincial governors in November 1942 (three months after the start of the Quit India movement), Lord Linlithgow was speculating on the distinct possibility that "there is a clique of financiers in India who, taking a leaf out of Japan's book, and even possibly with Japanese assistance, are endeavouring to use the Congress organisation and the political ferment it has brought about to

establish for themselves a position of financial domination in India comparable to that obtained by the 'Big Four' (Mitsubishi, Mitsui and others) in Japan." It is generally assumed, the viceroy went on, that the Hindus are naturally sympathetic towards the Buddhist culture of Japan and would welcome its support against the Muslims if the Japanese came to India. There may be some such feeling, but it may well have been fostered by the Birla brothers with a view to their ulterior objectives. A stage might be reached, the viceroy said, when they would have to strike against the Birlas and other leading financiers engaged with them in the conspiracy.

The Birlas and the Marwaris thus ran the risk of retaliation from the authorities for their support to Congress but wiser counsel seem to have prevailed and the British stayed their hand. The Marwari community was strongly affected by the movement for social reform and the abolition of untouchability and many Marwaris were prominent Gandhian workers in their own right. In 1921, the Tilak Memorial Fund was the first large-scale fund raised by the Congress and among the leading donors were GD and Jamnalal Bajaj, whose family groups now occupy No. 2 and No. 20 positions in the top 20 ranking list.

I do not know why GD compared himself and his community with the Quakers. They are more like the Jews who also started off as small-time bankers and turned themselves into the most powerful business community in the western world. Like the Jews, the Marwaris are the great survivors, though unlike the Jews, they have never had to contend with a holocaust. Keynes, a prominent member of the Bloomsbury clan presided over by the formidable Jewish family, the Woolfs, would certainly have appreciated the analogy. But to understand the Birlas, you have to understand the Marwaris, and to really understand the Marwaris you have to understand India. It is as simple as that—or is it?

## ROPE-MAKING

# The Tightening Noose

**O**N SUMMER nights all over north India, people put out hundreds of thousands of cots in the open air to sleep on. Most of the cots are made of rope strung on a wooden frame, and almost all of the rope comes from Saharanpur in Uttar Pradesh. Rope-making in Saharanpur is a traditional skill dating from the Mughal era; the rope, or *baan* is painstakingly twisted and woven from the *bhabhar* grass (*Eulaliopsis binata*) which grows tall and wild in the Shivalik foothills, a natural forest product that produces an unchecked and fresh crop every year.

Close to 40,000 families in this arid region, a belt of land 8 km wide and 60 km long and bordered by the Yamuna on the west and the Ganga on the east, depend almost entirely on rope-making for their livelihood. Slowly and inexorably, however, more and more of the rope-makers, who belong to the lowly Harijan cobbler caste or the backward 'Bandookchi' Muslims, are being squeezed into destitution, or migration to other areas in search of labour.

**Vanishing Industry:** The slow dying of the Saharanpur *baan* industry has been induced by the Uttar Pradesh Government's Forest Corporation, a body that is supposed to protect traditional forest-based industry, and a combination of forest contractors, middlemen, and a powerful clique of rope traders from Saharanpur. "In the old days," remembers Jyoti Ram of Sherpur Pelo village, "we used to go into the jungle and cut ourselves as much *bhabhar* grass as we needed. Then the Government put a price on nature's bounty."

That was in 1951, when the Forest Act brought all forests under the Government's exclusive control. For three decades thereafter, the Government leased out big chunks of forest called *kholi* to contractors, who hired labourers to cut the grass. The contractors then sold the grass on credit to middlemen throughout the *baan*-producing region, who in turn sold it on

credit to the village rope-makers. At every level there was profit to be made, and the rope-maker was suddenly forced to pay nearly treble the old price for the *bhabhar* grass.

"An average family of five members, working from dawn to dusk, produces roughly 100 kg of rope every fortnight," says Sanjaya Garg, general secretary of the Vikalp Social Organisation, which has been working to better the rope-makers' lot since 1979. "The rope is then sold at weekly markets at Daoudpura and Biharigarh, close to Saharanpur. Few rope-makers' families earned more than Rs 125 a month about four years ago."

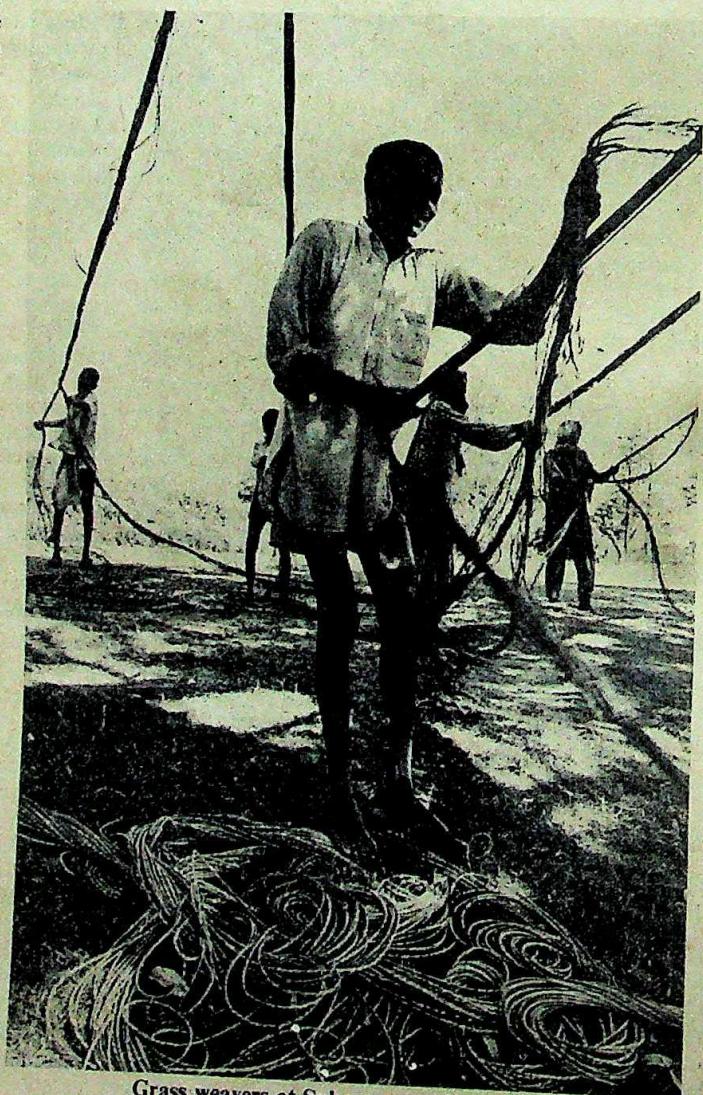
At the markets, the rope-makers are

compelled to take whatever price is fixed by the Saharanpur traders, for money always desperately short.

In late 1980, after months of persuasion, Vikalp activists succeeded in getting 12 villagers from Mirzapur Pelo together and set up the Baan Utpadak Samiti. Rope-makers throughout the region have been very suspicious of cooperative societies, after their experience of the artisans co-operative set up by the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC). The KVIC-sponsored exclusive societies had been largely defunct for a decade, and the rope-makers had lost even a share of the mysterious loss-money in the process of the governmental body.

However, the Mirzapur Pelo villagers realised that they only hope to eliminate the entry of middlemen if they crafted for the collective strength. Pitching in capital of Rs 100 each, a wage of Rs 32 per quintal of grass, 'pioneers' began to buy grass directly from the contractors on cash terms. Now the wage of Rs 32 per quintal of grass has immediately, their bargaining power shot up, and they can get better grass at prices cent lower than the men's.

**Collective Strength:** The monsoon came in 1981. The Corporation rope-makers faced another annual peril—the period of Purda, of stocking up enough grass at what it has last through the wet season. They took a bank loan of Rs 18,000, used the money to buy grass in bulk, and actually produced it centrally, and repaid the bank fully after a mere six months. Last year the Samiti members got inferior grass at prices less than 60 kg of grass each kholi yield. The bank gladly gave a loan of 1.41 lakh—which was at a very low level. When the Government's Integrated Rural Development Project (IRDP), through its district Development Agency, cannot buy the Samiti's auctions, it has sanctioned a subsidy of 55,000 to the Samiti members. Each member put Rs 500 in a fund that is being used to build an office and a storage shed. Discontent: Last year, the grass was sold at Rs 32 per quintal, and the contractor's depot at Bala Gadda had unsold piles of decomposing grass. "We cut out the grass," says Sumer Chahal, Shahpur Gadda, one of the original Samiti members. "The grass was in condition, who is in control, and he is not satisfied with us. We work hard, but we do not get paid well."



Grass weavers at Saharanpur: bleak future

My family used to earn only Rs 100 a month before the Samiti was formed, and we earn almost double." "Here again we ran up against the Government's counter-productive laws," says Vikalp's Ganesh Prasad. Uttar Pradesh's cooperative laws stipulate that artisans' cooperatives can be formed only through governmental departments, either District Industrial Centres or the KVIC. The cruellest blow was yet to be administered. Last year, the Uttar Pradesh Government decided that forest contractors in the region indulging in too many malpractices in the artisanal sector to timber cutting. It therefore imposed a 10-year ban on the felling of timber. Village India directed that all forest products would be sold exclusively by the Uttar Pradesh KVIC. This Corporation. In the months since, the defunct corporation has proved to be just another loss-leader in the exploitative chain that body. Even the rope-makers.

**THE MECHANICS** of the Corporation's entry have been catastrophic for the rope-makers. Earlier, the contractors used to pay grass-cutting labour an average of Rs 17 per quintal (100 kg) of grass to buy. Now the contractors are paid an average of Rs 32 per quintal by the Corporation on cash terms for the grass cut; they pay the labourers their bargaining wages, do not have to worry about storage, and they cut the grass, no longer take care to see if it is cut and stored properly, and when the khol yields at least 10,000 quintals, make a tidy profit of Rs 1.5 lakh.

**Strength:** "In the beginning, we thought, would makers face the middlemen," mourns Hari Prasad of Purda Khera village. "Instead, enough grass at what it has done. The contractors the wet grass carelessly put wet grass with dry stock, bank loans. Much of the grass is therefore blackened the money gold when we get it. Earlier a quintal less in bulk, actually contained 120 kg and we repaid the produce about 90 kg of rope from it. After six months we get inferior grass and rarely get more than 60 kg of rope from a quintal of grass. Earnings have therefore dropped to very low levels throughout the Gaarh area. Production this year has averaged 25 per cent of previous levels; the rope-makers cannot buy grass in bulk at the Corporation's auctions, and so it is still being sold by the middlemen, who continue to amiti men on credit to the rope-makers. The Cor-

poration used to set up Samitis: "The rope-makers have realised that they can fight the Corporation only if they stand together." Adds Ganesh Prasad: "Basically the fight has to be political."

"Life has become very difficult," says Sumer Chand. "We can earn more only by keeping cattle or selling dead wood that we find in the jungle. I have five children, and

Rs 72.50 per quintal to the middlemen. Perversely, however, the ceiling price of the grass sold to paper mills—the major customer is the Ballarpur Paper Mill at Yamunanagar in Haryana—is only Rs 40 per quintal. "The Corporation does not allow us to choose good grass," says the Baan Utpadak Samiti's Sumer Chand, "and we have to buy whatever we get, even though the Samiti can, unlike unorganised rope-makers, buy directly from the depots. So we have had to buy inferior grass from as far away as Haryana. More and more men throughout this region are now being forced to work on gangs breaking stones for road-building contractors so that the little they earn there can augment their families' income."

The Corporation's entry into the grass trade has helped sharpen the rope-makers' consciousness of collective strength. Says Nathiram, who is one of nine Vikalp activists trying to persuade more centres like Mirza-

the choice for me is whether to give them clothes or food—there is not enough money for both."

**Unrelieved Destitution:** The cycle of poverty is therefore perpetuated; since children are indispensable in rope-making, they are not sent to school, and an average literacy rate of 6.7 per cent contributes to keeping the rope-makers mired in exploitation. Although both the parliamentary constituencies in the region are represented by Lok Dal members, no pressure has been put on the Uttar Pradesh Government to relieve the rope-makers' plight.

At the Daoudpura market last fortnight the effects of the Corporation's workings were abundantly visible. Compared to average sales of 800 quintals at each market in pre-Corporation days, the total sold at Daoudpura was only 200 quintals, and prices had shot up to an average of Rs 14.50 per 5-kg bundle of rope against the previous average of Rs 11. Says Shriyans Kumar Jain, a trader at the market: "Before Partition, Saharanpur rope used to sell as far away as in Lahore. Now we face stiff competition from rope made in Orissa's Mayurbhanj district, and West Bengal's Midnapore district, which are cheaper than Saharanpur rope. But our rope is superior in quality, and so we sell despite high prices."

To add to the traders' woes, the Uttar Pradesh Government levies a sales tax of 8 per cent, whereas the West Bengal Government has abolished sales tax on rope, and the Orissa Government encourages commercial cultivation of bhabhar grass. Says Vikalp's Ashok Chowdhury: "The Forest Act provides that low-level forest produce can be sold directly at subsidised rates to producers, but the Corporation refuses to sell grass in retail to the rope-makers."

The tragedy is that rope-making is a fringe industry, and the Government does not bother about its importance. As the noose tightens around the rope-makers' necks, there is only desolation amongst the poorer villagers who can perceive no alternative future. Traditional rope cots are now being edged aside by nylon-and-aluminium folding cots. The world outside the Gaarh region is getting increasingly sophisticated, but the rope-makers' lives, filled every day with the tedious hand-crafting of their product, are pushed further into poverty and deprivation. In the end survival might overtake loyalty to a traditional skill, and as the rope-makers reach the ends of their tethers, they will desert the region for greener pastures. It is also true of our system that the death of rope-making in Saharanpur will not be mourned; only, it might cause a twinge of nostalgia when a good rope cot becomes a museum piece.

—CHAITANYA KALBAG



Trader at the rope market: dying business

pur Pole to set up Samitis: "The rope-makers have realised that they can fight the Corporation only if they stand together." Adds Ganesh Prasad: "Basically the fight has to be political."

"Life has become very difficult," says Sumer Chand. "We can earn more only by keeping cattle or selling dead wood that we find in the jungle. I have five children, and



**Company Meeting: Hindustan Lever Limited**

# THE GROWING RURAL MARKET IN INDIA

**Speech delivered by  
Dr. A.S. Ganguly,  
Chairman,  
Hindustan Lever Limited,  
at the Annual  
General Meeting  
held at Bombay on  
Friday, 24th June, 1983**

The business known today as Hindustan Lever began operations about a hundred years ago, importing, distributing and selling soaps, and later toiletries, detergents and foods. Manufacturing facilities were set up in the 1930s and investment in scientific research in the 1950s. During the last two decades, major diversification programmes as well as capital investment in backward areas have been undertaken. All through this period, the company has continued to invest in and strengthen its sales and distribution system. It is known today for its vast network of sales outlets throughout the country, covering several hundred thousand markets. The company's periodic socio-economic surveys both in urban and rural India have enabled it to assess the changes taking place there, and to suitably modify its marketing and distribution set-up to meet new needs of consumers economically.

Over the past few decades, Hindustan Lever Ltd. (HLL) has been supplying to its rural customers — directly as well as indirectly — a wide range of products. The company believes that in spite of the high rate of urban population growth through migration and other routes, and the consequent increase in their purchasing power, the rural market offers opportunities which are vast and yet relatively untapped. A recent macro-economic survey indicates that there is great opportunity not only for further growth and distribution of traditional consumer goods, but also, increasingly, for products which help improve farm yields. Interest is also spurred by the company's plans for marketing a wide range of products such as plant growth nutrient, rhizobia, fertilisers and others for the farm sector.

I have chosen Rural Market as the subject for this year's Annual General Meeting address in order to examine some of the latest developments taking place there and assess their economic and commercial significance. To understand them, I believe, is important to the company's strategy for growth and diversification.

As a result of the country's successive Five Year Plans since the 1950s, agricultural pro-

ductivity has improved; without doubt this has given a new impetus to India's rural economy. There is, however, a continuous debate centring around "poverty line" — a debate made only more complex by the country's high birth rate and generally improved life expectancy. But the "line" does not divide the country's population evenly. Data from varied sources indicate that there has been a real and absolute increase in the standard of living of the rural population, particularly in certain States, and some of these improvements are rather impressive.

The numbers being continuously drawn into the cash economy have risen. This highlights the need and the opportunity for the spread of trade and industry to rural areas. Does this mean that at this stage India is well set to build its future with developments in wealthier countries as a model? The answer has to be 'No'. This is so because the models and systems which will succeed here have to evolve, given the country's unique economic, social and political realities, and the aspirations of the majority of the people.

The Indian scene presents interesting trends: The land holding community's expenditure pattern shows that it is an active and expanding part of the cash economy. The industry too is slowly dispersing to the countryside. There are also investments in rural areas by the Government as part of development planning. A thorough rural survey and market analysis are needed for determining the most cost effective method of distribution as most hamlets in the interior are inaccessible.

In this context, communications, trading, and distribution must be regarded as activities of national importance. If these activities are not adequately comprehended at the macro level they tend to be regarded merely as conduits for goods and cash, and become a ready target for higher taxation. In order, therefore, to comprehend the socio-economic implications of the growing importance of the rural market, I have attempted to analyse some of the factors. During my frequent business tours through small towns and rural areas in different parts of the country I have felt greatly encouraged by the growth potential there. I have also realised how new techniques have to be continuously developed and tested in order to service this varied market in the most cost effective manner. I believe this subject needs to be better understood and used as a vehicle for ushering a greater measure of economic spread. I hope this speech will lead to wider study and debate on an important subject. The rest of the speech is divided in three parts:

- I. Current marketing issues in India
- II. The size and importance of the rural market
- III. Hindustan Lever and the rural market

## I. CURRENT MARKETING ISSUES IN INDIA

### 1. Marketing as an industrial activity

The market place is one of the few areas of modern society in which people have an opportunity to participate directly in public life. However, in the scheme of economic development in India, the generation of surplus labour force and operation of a free market economy have been accorded the prominence they deserve. Marketing is erroneously perceived, by many, as a superfluous activity more suited to a capitalist economy. During the period there was a drive towards import substitution marketing in India was considered to be an unfair technique used by multinational companies with the help of brand names and advertisements, to the disadvantage of local competition. Marketing was also seen as an activity or semi-urban activity restricted to a economy and catering, somewhat unsuccessfully, to supposedly more affluent consumers.

I believe, however, these popular notions are fast changing. The high cost of production due to obsolescence of technology and the pressures to export, combined with the need to produce more within the country, forcing a reappraisal of the whole area of manufacturing management. Marketing is seen as an invaluable tool for economic development within the country as well as in international trade. This is true both of agricultural products as well as industrial products.

### 2. Potential for growth

Until now, the practice of modern marketing has mostly remained confined to the urban centres. The inappropriateness of this is undergoing rapid change, is now becoming obvious with the emergence of a larger cash economy in the rural areas. Agriculture is 40 per cent and from the industrial sector, 22 per cent. Of this, one-third of the industrial sector's contribution is directly related to inputs into the agricultural sector.

In addition to the contribution made by agricultural commodities including cash crops, there are other factors which help in the development of a cash economy in rural areas. These can be traced to the socio-economic policies of the Government meant primarily for achieving a measure of distributive justice.

There are large projects, dams, irrigation and canal networks, and new industrial units around steel mills, fertiliser plants, and so on. Besides these, there has been a deliberate attempt to encourage and subsidise investment in non-industrialised, backward areas and encourage the dispersal of organised private sector industry from the urban centres as well as foster more evenly spread economic development from the fo-

# THE GROWING RURAL MARKET IN INDIA

in the country. To force the pace, the government has now published a list of "zero density districts". All in all, the cash consumer economy is bound to expand rapidly. The process has been catalysed also by the dispersal of branches of nationalised banks into rural areas and the phenomenal growth of communications, first through the transistor radio, and through television.

## Spread of marketing

All this represents the positive effect of marketing over the years, even though it was neither recognised nor its importance accepted at such. The Green Revolution itself was the result of marketing of a scientific technology to masses of rural India. It possibly is the biggest and most successful marketing endeavour of all times. Over a very short period, the adoption of hybrid varieties and chemical fertilisers came to be known to virtually every farmer in the country. Not only that: A vast majority of farmers switched to modern farming practices abandoning ones which had held sway for centuries. The credit for this goes to the Government agencies and individuals who organised this successful marketing task on such a scale.

Indeed, as part of this effort, rural advertising is increasingly evident throughout the countryside. The majority of advertisements on billboards are for fertilisers, hybrid seeds, tractors, pumps and pesticides, not to mention the range of family planning. Therefore, advertising, in the Indian context, can be seen as consisting of techniques for driving economic mobility within the country. Emergence of an active cash economy would create a strong rural demand and increase consumption. The traditional growth of the dominance of the urban industrial centres will be replaced by a rapid change. More equitable growth in the rural areas would also help in the GDP from rural into urban centres.

## THE SIZE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE RURAL MARKET

The rural market is made up of two broad components:

- a) the market for consumption goods, including both fast moving consumer goods and durables; and
- b) the market for agricultural inputs and other investment goods.

Not surprisingly, a survey carried out recently indicates that the entire demand potential for manufactured goods that exists in this rural areas has been largely untapped. The truth, however, is that not even a fraction of the rural market has been serviced by the industries in the organised sector. There are certain important factors which affect its growth. This will

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products and ideas, thus supplementing the demand for such products.

## 4. The market for agricultural inputs

The increasing demand for manufactured consumer goods in rural areas is also complemented by burgeoning demand for agricultural inputs. This is borne out by the compound rate of growth in the offtake of agricultural inputs and equipment between 1970-71 and 1980-81: fertilisers 10 per cent; pesticides 12 per cent; area under high yielding varieties 11 per cent; tractors 15 per cent; pumps and tubewells 11 per cent. However, these percentages by themselves do not explain the emerging progressive change in attitudes. Recently, the Marketing Research Department of HLL carried out a survey of farm practices in Andhra and Punjab/Haryana. Over 90 per cent of farmers interviewed felt that "they should adopt more and more new farm practices". Between 65 and 70 per cent agreed that "they should take greater risks in adopting new practices". The study, in summary, established that in these areas, the farmers are eager to use newer agricultural technology for improving profits and are prepared to take calculated risks.

## 5. Sources of rural purchasing capacity

The factors that contribute to purchasing capacity in rural areas are:

a) **Marketable agricultural surplus and rural/urban terms of trade:** So far as manufactured consumer goods are concerned, regression analysis indicates that there is a 0.7 per cent rise in consumption for every one per cent increase in marketable surplus of foodgrains. The consumption of agricultural inputs, like fertiliser, is governed mainly by two variables:

- i) ratio of the foodgrain price of the previous period to the fertiliser price of the current period; and
- ii) irrigated area as a percentage of gross sown area.

To prevent stagnation of agricultural output there is a need for a consistent policy so as to maintain a favourable balance between agricultural input prices and foodgrain output prices.

As the irrigated area goes up, the cropping pattern/intensity changes, thus changing the consumption of fertiliser per hectare. There is also a strong correlation between the consumption of fertiliser per hectare and the value of output. This increase in per hectare value (income) ultimately reflects itself in a demand for consumer goods.

b) **Remittances:** Districtwise data on remittances from outside is not available. It is, however, well known that a large number of families in some pockets in Kerala, Punjab, Saurashtra and Kutch receive remittances from relatives abroad. In 1978 the total inward remittances in the state of Kerala alone were estimated at Rs.400 crores. Therefore traditional remittances from within the country are being supplemented in several states by remittances from

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## THE GROWING RURAL MARKET IN INDIA

overseas, thus creating new consumption and purchasing patterns.

c) **Government expenditure:** The Sixth Plan outlay on agriculture and allied programmes will be about Rs.5,700 crores. Investment in flood control/irrigation facilities will be around Rs.12,000 crores in 1983-85 and the Central Sector outlay for rural development and associated programmes will be Rs.2,300 crores. These will generate income, and the increased purchasing power of rural areas can be expected to support consumption of manufactured items. Further, these investments are expected to augment the income generation process from land in future years, which in turn, will accelerate the growth of rural markets. The investment proposed during the Sixth Plan for developing Village & Khadi Industries is of the order of Rs.1,780 crores. This too will encourage the income generation process.

d) **Dispersal of industry:** Lastly, the policies governing industrial licencing have made it almost imperative for the private sector to seek investment opportunities in backward areas. If this is not impeded by regulatory agencies, it will greatly speed up the spread effect.

### 6. The need for a selective approach

There are wide regional variations in the prosperity levels of the districts and hence in their market potential. These need to be analysed and understood sectorally in order to determine the methods for approaching them. A socio-economic survey undertaken in four progressive districts, one from each part of the country — Tanjore, Ludhiana, Burdwan and Kolhapur — revealed a healthy per capita income growth of five per cent per annum among big and small farmers against a national average of 1.5 per cent. This has come about through improved use of land, coupled with a reduction in family size.

There can be a number of attributes on the basis of which a prosperity index can be worked out. However, a very reliable indicator of the growth of market potential and the development of a cash economy is the growth in bank deposits. Further, growth in bank deposits in a district not only reflects the growth in income or inward remittances; it also shows the kind of expenditure/investment activity taking place, both in the private and Government sectors. An analysis of the growth of bank deposits was carried out recently in a number of progressive districts. The growth rate ranged from 113 per cent per annum in Ludhiana to 145 per cent per annum in Trichur. Further, the growth was mainly in:

- areas which were agriculturally prosperous; and
- areas like Trichur and Kutch, which get large amount of remittances.

While it should not be the aim to preferentially cater to the needs of the more progressive

districts, analyses confirm the dangers of applying an uniform approach for the rural market.

### 7. Problems in reaching the rural consumer

There are about 576,000 villages in India, 79 per cent of them with a population less than 1,000. Almost 80 per cent of the villages do not have all-weather roads. Rural consumers are also far less homogenous than their urban counterparts and differ from region to region. Therefore, it is not possible to merely extend urban products to rural markets.

The low density of population and inaccessibility makes the problem of servicing these villages individually difficult and often uneconomical. Direct delivery of goods to even the top 1 per cent of villages costs twice as much as servicing urban markets. Therefore, in the initial stage, it may be better to concentrate only on the larger villages, 'mandi' towns, and towns with large agricultural hinterlands that act as foci for distribution. The semi-wholesalers and retailers servicing smaller villages can obtain stocks from these places or the villagers themselves can buy the necessary items.

Studies conducted by the Marketing Research Department of Hindustan Lever showed that about 90 per cent of the farmers visit the nearest town at least once a month to sell their produce and purchase their requirements. In other words, the towns with large agricultural hinterlands can become the gateways for entry into the rural market.

Under the rural road construction programme, the Government plans to link villages with a population of 1,500 or above, with all-weather roads. Progress in this has been somewhat tardy. By the end of 1985, at least 20,000 such villages would be linked. If this project succeeds, the entire complexion of the rural market could change.

### 8. Literacy and media habits

Despite the low level of literacy in rural areas, the growth between 1971 and 1981 is significant. Five crore more people have become literate in the course of the last decade, a figure almost equal to the entire population of France. Growth in literacy levels is expected to continue, and this in turn will lead to greater awareness of products.

Some market research studies done on the media habits of farmers in Andhra and Haryana/Punjab are quite revealing. They clearly show that, contrary to popular belief, organised media has a significant role in supplementing efforts to reach rural consumers. Over 70 per cent of the population listens to the radio; about 65 per cent in Andhra goes to cinemas. The corresponding figure for Punjab and Haryana is 26 per cent. In both areas, over 30 per cent reads newspapers regularly.

### 9. Constraints in developing the rural market

In making out a case for opportunities are rapidly developing in the rural market, we must not wish to underestimate the several difficulties in planning for growth. The marketing effort for manufactured consumer goods as well as agricultural inputs in rural areas is strained by:

- high distribution costs;
- high initial market development expenditure;
- inability of the small retailer to stock without adequate credit facilities;
- inadequate infrastructural facilities connecting roads, warehouses, availability, etc.).

The development of the rural market involve additional cost, both in terms of production and distribution. This cost of market development will have to be built into the price policy for specific brands. It would be a welcome step if the additional distribution which is incurred in the development of rural market is recognised by the Government in the interest of a uniform pricing policy for both rural and urban consumers. On the contrary, legitimate marketing activities such as advertising and promotion are now penalised. This can be the single greatest impediment to the future rate of growth.

In rural marketing, often it is not the quality of a brand that is crucial but creating an awareness concerning a particular "product". For instance fertilisers. In such a situation, syndicated advertising may bring down market development expenditure. Other traditional forms of communication might be considered: A recent study done by us shows that stocks serviced are often constrained by inadequate credit facilities. Banks can play a very constructive role in this context by increasing the volume of credit to the agro town stockists, so that they are able to service a higher volume of trade at relatively less margins.

### III. HINDUSTAN LEVER AND THE RURAL MARKET

Having made out a case for developing and servicing the growing rural market in our country, I will now briefly state some areas in which HLL has been active. There are number of ways in which the traditional marketing expertise of HLL has grown and evolved over the years. HLL has been manufacturing and distributing consumer products for nearly hundred years. The company's range of products has been most visible in the urban and semi-urban areas no doubt, but its traditional strength has also been in selling in the rural market.

HLL regards rural marketing as an investment and not an expenditure. The initial investment for distribution and communication — high and returns come after a long gestation period. But it is our belief that it is an investment worth making; and the fact that some of the brands today command pre-eminent position in the rural market, has vindicated our model to test

# THE GROWING RURAL MARKET IN INDIA

And in recent years new opportunities in the countryside have greatly enhanced our company's activities in that direction.

## An efficient countrywide distribution network

All products manufactured by the company are available virtually throughout the country. This has not happened accidentally. Even the method of distribution is not uniform for all products in all markets. Yet, the products do reach the remotest parts of the country by a variety of ways which defy clear classification. From the factories our products move to about 10 Clearing & Forwarding Agents. From here, in terms of population, they reach some 3,500 stockists located in towns upto 20,000 population. Thirty to 40 per cent of the goods which ultimately reach remote markets go through wholesalers or semi-wholesalers. Another 10 to 15 per cent are distributed by stockists through Mandis, Haats, as well as through physical deliveries to shops. As many as 10,000 additional villages are visited by stockists regularly. Our company also spend about 30 per cent of their time visiting the rural market, establishing direct links between the company and the rural consumers. The other methods are a permutation of these routes, depending upon the region, accessibility, time of the year, and so on. These efforts enable us to distribute our products at a uniform price not only in 3,500 towns, but also almost 70,000 rural outlets. This also ensures fair and equitable distribution of products, even when they are in short supply. Regular visits and direct contact with the rural market helps us to spot and weed out spurious products made by unscrupulous manufacturers who mislead the relatively less informed rural consumers.

Superimposed upon all this is a major but barely visible activity: marketing. Over the years, advertising communications and services have evolved in tune with rural needs and in a manner which is different from what is effective in larger towns and cities. Popularising the use of detergents all over the country is a contemporary success achieved by this company. This has spurred the development of unconventional communication systems appropriate to the rural market needs. These can cost upto six times as much as reaching an urban consumer through established media. The company now has a wide national base. Besides continuously improving to make it more cost effective for promotional products, it is being selectively deployed for the development of the new agricultural strength of the company.

A number of innovations are under way. Currently we are testing the market for our milk collection in some of the most remote areas of our District where we buy milk from a large number of farmers for our Dairy. Some of our collection centres not only purchase milk from the farmers but also make available cat food model to test whether rural centres and

stockists can provide farmers with agri-products and cattle/poultry feed, and when appropriate act as outlets for certain farm products. The two-way relationship though not unique has wider scope than is being used today.

## 2. Exports

HLL, as a recognised export trading house, undertakes large exports of traditional Indian rural products such as carpets, leather goods, and other items made by the cottage sector. The access to and understanding of rural markets, no doubt provides the potential for developing and encouraging the growth, in some traditional areas. But it must be readily admitted that development, growth and profitability are not possible in exports without the help of a high level of marketing. In India it is more so because we derive our export strength mainly from traditional internal resources. With the development of the rural market, prospects for boosting exports of products of traditional rural craftsmen will increase manifold. HLL's international links can play a significant role in this task.

## 3. Research & Development

Since 1959, Research and Development has been a driving force in HLL's growth. The success story of substitution of all imported and traditional raw materials in soap making is by now well known. Similar, but possibly less known, contributions have been made in many other consumer products and businesses such as foods and animal feeds. Perhaps, HLL is the only private sector company in the country which has extensive toxicological and safety testing facilities which ensure that all products manufactured and marketed by it are safe for the consumer.

While HLL has always maintained its lead in the traditional products in the country's rural market, certain recent research discoveries have widened the scope immensely and in a manner which could not have been anticipated a few years ago. This is the discovery of the plant growth nutrient, Mixtalol, in the company's research laboratory. The product has been successfully field tested for over four years now. It increases agricultural (cereal, vegetable, etc.) productivity by 20 to 30 per cent by enhancing the photosynthetic process. This is possibly one of the more exciting discoveries in this country, particularly at a time when agricultural productivity is facing prospects of diminishing returns, but the marketing challenge it poses is exciting and arduous, as our experience is proving. It has led us into an area of rural marketing which, while being supplementary, is different from the traditional methods of consumer product marketing even in rural India, (with the possible exception of our animal feeds business). In addition to some other research products, we are now gearing ourselves to marketing inorganic fertiliser, diammonium phosphate, from 1984-85. All these, I believe, are sufficient reason to increase the frequency

of our socio-economic surveys to discover new opportunities and challenges. Current research efforts in several new areas suggest that in future years, the rural consumer will be the focal point of much of our marketing and distribution plans.

## 4. Role of trade

For any company to undertake communication and distribution upto the retail outlet on its own would be prohibitively expensive. It is the presence of the ubiquitous Indian trader, the wholesaler, the transport agencies and several thousand people employed by them directly or indirectly which makes cost effective and successful business possible. Therefore, the fairly common perception that these are unnecessary middlemen engaged in profiteering and blackmarketing is a disservice to the majority engaged in a very important and time-honoured occupation in this country. HLL owes a great deal to its agents and distributors, some of whom trace their association with the company to about a hundred years; indeed, many represent third generation links. Representatives of our associate companies from many parts of the world come to observe and study these systems and relationships, which are considered to be among the most efficient and equitable. If the trading houses of Japan provide similar services in much of South East Asia, the Indian trader does this magnificently in his own country and in several parts of Africa and West Asia. The trade also sometimes generates resentment because in many inaccessible communities they come from outside, and by perseverance and hard work, build up a thriving business. Most people do not seem to appreciate that all this, in the ultimate analysis, is much more than trading. Therefore the pre-eminent role of the trade in the rural market cannot be overstated.

## 5. Investment and rural development

Investment in backward areas and our experience in Integrated Rural Development in Etah since 1976, also makes us confident about the future prospects of economic well-being of rural India, given certain managerial inputs. Most of our major investments in the last 20 years have been in the industrially backward regions of the country, spurned by the opportunities, encouragement and incentives. It started with investment in Etah in 1962 and increased rapidly in the seventies through investments in Maharashtra, Jammu & Kashmir, West Bengal, and most recently, in Madhya Pradesh. The management of industries in such widely dispersed rural areas provides experience and knowledge invaluable for the company's investment and growth plans.

Our involvement in Integrated Rural Development (IRD) gives us the opportunity to better understand the problems that slow down development in much of rural India and the opportunities it offers. We have now made it mandatory for all our management trainees to work for two months in our Etah rural development programme. In this way we help the urban-bred young men to comprehend the problems of the majority of our countrymen.

(Continued)

DCM-ESCORTS

# Sharing Losses

**L**AST week-end the seesaw battle being waged by Swraj Paul to take over Escorts and DCM slowed to a less suspenseful motion when the London-based industrialist suffered a series of setbacks. The first and predictable one came when Escorts' Board of Directors refused on June 9 to register 4,62,377 shares lodged by Paul's brokers Harish Bhasin and Bharat Bhushan. At the company's Annual General Meeting the same day, a poll demanded by seven Paul lobbyists on two resolutions—a move designed to see which way the financial institutions as majority shareholders would swing—backfired when the voting went overwhelmingly in favour of Escorts' management.

Then, soon after the Finance Ministry ordered the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to inquire into Paul's massive equity purchases in the two companies, the bank threw on another damper when it ordered Paul's bankers, Punjab National Bank (PNB) not to release to the brokers a sum of Rs 1.07 crore remitted by the tycoon's Caparo Group.

Between March and early June, however, PNB had already released over Rs 11 crore of Paul's remittances to the brokers to pay for Escorts' disputed 4.62 lakh shares and 1.2 million shares of DCM.

**Close Call:** The RBI's pre-emptive strike nearly caused a crisis on the Delhi Stock Exchange (DSE) because the blocked funds were meant to pay for one lakh Escorts shares and 85,000 DCM shares received by Harish Bhasin against earlier transactions. Bhasin—who is also president of the DSE—staved off blacklisting only by mobilising local resources. But there were grave doubts about whether Bhasin had violated rules by indulging in forward deals, and by paying for non-resident purchases with local funds. "Before people accuse me they should first wash their own houses," retorted Bhasin. "What is resident or non-resident for me? I have to pay for the shares in rupees in any case, and I did so."

At fortnight's end Paul's brokers were claiming total purchases of 9.75 lakh Escorts shares (representing 7.5 per cent of total sha-

reholding) and 1.2 million DCM shares (representing 13 per cent of total sharehold). But another potential slip-up by investors surfaced. The Government's Portfolios Investment Scheme stipulates that all non-resident investments ought to be routed through a bank; when a bank deputes a broker to purchase shares it is expected to submit reports of all transactions to the RBI. In Paul's case, the PNB had failed to observe the rule. Paul's spokesmen sought to put this down to a technical error, but a senior official retorted by saying: "The law does not recognise grey areas. It sees misdeeds in black and white."

Stock market sources, however, said that Paul's brokers might in fact have benefited from the RBI inquiry and the stopping of Paul's June 13 remittance. The two factors contributed to a dramatic crash in the scrips on June 20, with DCM plunging from a high of Rs 105.50 to Rs 70, and Escorts from a high of Rs 82 to Rs 65. Reports indicated that Paul's brokers took advantage of the market's slump to pay for large chunks of previously contracted shares. The market swung upward again the next day, and suspicion of deeper game were reinforced when Governor Manmohan Singh was summoned urgently by Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram for the brokers to explain what their shares would do.

## ADVERTISEMENT

### THE GROWING RURAL MARKET IN INDIA

This, in turn, helps develop a cadre of people who would be better tuned to the needs, aspirations and opportunities outside the mainstream of India's urban life. Another aspect is that rural development remains a neglected sector and the involvement of companies like HLL enables the induction of scarce managerial inputs.

HLL with its near-century experience in marketing has an intimate knowledge of its consumers both in urban and rural India. Its international connections have been of great significance in meeting the needs of consumers in many countries around the world. Today its sound technological base and innovations particularly born of agriculture related scientific research make HLL all set to meet emerging new needs of the farming community. The company is also moving to the undeveloped rural hinterland with new investments. Its IRD programme in Etah district has brought to the company's people a ring-side view of the countryside and the immense potential that India's villages offer for business. Without doubt, all this spells new opportunities. But they represent tremendous challenges as well.

### CONCLUSIONS

At a time when one hears of sectoral recession, lack of entrepreneurial opportunities and, in general, about risks and regulations that restrict growth, the slow but steady development

of a widening cash economy in the major part of this country is an opportunity which certainly deserves more attention.

The growth of economic activity in rural India is attended by per capita numbers and unending debates about the poverty line. These are real and cannot be wished away. But in a democratic society uniform growth would be an elusive goal. If one set aside for a moment the socio-political aspects and instead analysed the socio-economic realities, then the dispersal of industrial investment, Plan expenditure, marketing of agricultural and other products into rural India represents an important aspect of a possible approach for ensuring a measure of uniform economic spread.

In this analysis, one must recognise the role of communications and encourage rather than inhibit this, as is attempted from time to time. Rural communications must not only carry messages for services. Communication is an expensive and difficult task. This cannot be denied. At the same time, to ignore it would be imprudent. This has been forcefully demonstrated in the successful Green Revolution, and to an extent, in ushering in the message of family planning by the Government. It must now encourage the industrial and service sectors to divert a major part of their activity and attention to the rural market and accelerate economic mobility.

The remarkable strengths of the small trader can be supplemented and channelised for more equitable distribution. HLL's experience in marketing and distribution has been greatly strengthened by innovations in technology and investments in the core sector. Its research discoveries of chemical compounds which boost agricultural productivity, and investment for manufacturing inorganic fertilisers provide added impetus for deeper penetration of the hinterland. National surveys as well as research undertaken by the company confirm the view that population growth tends to overshadow progress being made and opportunities which are developing. However, they also clearly bring out the rapid developments taking place in many parts of rural India. We must now get out of the shadow of lopsided growth of the urban centres and carefully plan to service the increasing demands of non-urban India.

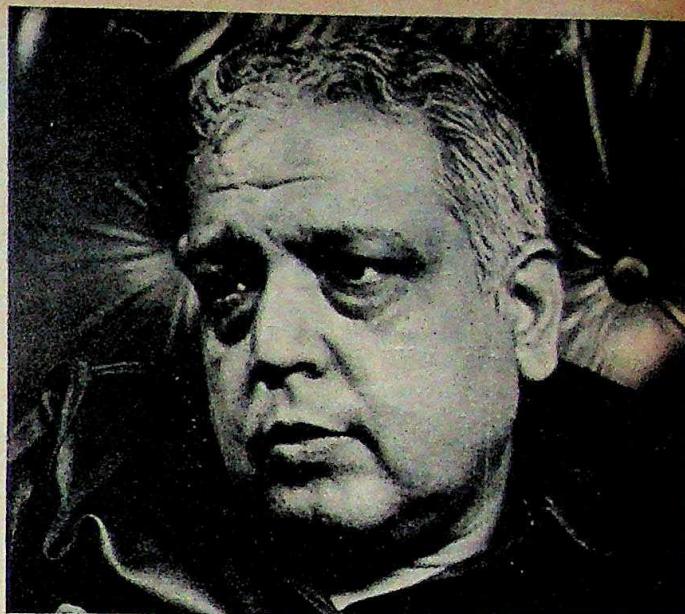
Lastly, I am aware that in delivering this speech I have touched the proverbial tip of a subject which is vast and more complex than can be encompassed in a single address. However, even in a limited manner, this speech provides some interest for further investigations, it would have served its purpose.

**NOTE:** This does not purport to be a report of the proceedings of the Annual General Meeting.

Anyone wishing to have a copy of this speech in booklet form may please write to the Communications Department, Hindustan Lever Ltd., P.O. Box 400 001, Bombay 400 001.



Paul: suffering setbacks



Bhasin: on a buying spree

arrive to Delhi on June 24. When INDIA market swung against Bhasin the following day he said: "I anticipate that the RBI will clear the remittance within the next three or four days." That would result in a windfall for the brokers, because the two companies' shares would immediately shoot up.

**Counter-offensive:** In London, Paul was reported to be considering appealing against the refusal to register his purchases to the Company Law Board or the DCM, meanwhile fired another salvo announcing the early closure of its books on June 29 instead of November—and proposed its annual general meeting by months. The hasty move was ostensibly after a change in the company's name from Delhi Cloth and General Mills Limited, but it was clear that the company actually wanted Paul to show his hand by lodging the shares he had bought. The brokers were therefore forced to buy as many shares as possible in a very short time. Said an angry Bhasin: "This is a waste and frivolous expenditure at the shareholders' cost. DCM has not complied with Finance Ministry directive asking for conversion of all equity shares of whatever denomination into standard face values of Rs 100 and Rs 100. The company's shares are to have a par value of Rs 25, although the last date for conversion is December 31. Secondly, the company's conversions will get converted on July 1, such conversions will be in the old name. The nomenclature change takes time. What is the use of the sudden closure of the company? Except to provoke us?"

"Anything I say will only increase con-

fusion and controversy," said SBI Governor Manmohan Singh, declining to comment on questions raised about the legality of Paul transferring shares and about the reasons for the RBI stepping into the act. The Punjab National Bank was equally uncommunicative. So a host of technical questions raised by the rival parties—about the non-resident status of Swraj Paul's companies, whether Paul's share purchases had been completed (i.e. paid for and delivery taken) before May 2, when the 5 per cent ceiling on non-resident investment came into effect,—went begging for answers.

The biggest mystery concerned the vast sums that Swraj Paul had mobilised to mount his daring and adventurous stock market raid. Published figures about the financial status of his companies in Britain left little room for doubt that they did not have the wherewithal to finance a share market operation of this size: a good many of them had share capital that was counted in thousands of pounds, many were making losses, and in some cases their turnover was too small for them to even consider staking millions in a single and risky operation.

While the battleground shifted from the stock market ring to lawyers' chambers and closed-door meetings, Swraj Paul's brothers finally came into the open to try and clear public doubts about their operations—lobbying in Bombay, launching a campaign to meet the press, and in the process virtually dropping the so far consistent line that the

objective was not a takeover.

Contacted in London regarding the source of his funds, Paul suggested that banks had lent him the money. His brother Jit Paul in Calcutta chose to counter the question by asking: "If a customer pays a bill in my restaurant I don't ask him where he got his money from." Under existing laws the Government cannot investigate the sources of a non-resident's funds. Jit Paul and other "family friends" are also reportedly to be preparing to buy large chunks of Escorts and DCM equity with local funds—an eventuality that will vastly beef up the Paul family's holdings in the besieged companies.

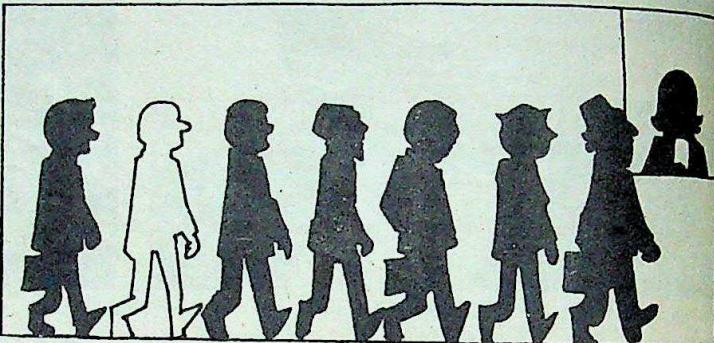
Broker Bhasin meanwhile waxed indignant about Escorts' refusal to register his purchases. "The sanctity of negotiable instruments is lost," he fumed, "and if this is allowed to stand the stock markets will suffer a severe jolt. It will be tantamount to negation of currency. I am within my rights to return all those shares as worthless pieces of paper and demand my money back in full. If the stock market has to suddenly pay me Rs 12 crore do you know what will happen? There will be a tremendous crash." Faced with a fluid and unprecedented situation the Government has been singularly coy about spelling out its policy in unambiguous terms. It might have bitten off more than it can chew for the unanswered questions of last fortnight are only the tip of the iceberg.

Manmohan Singh:  
no comment

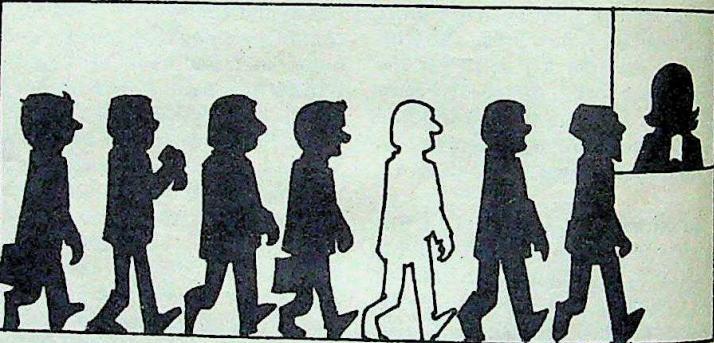
— CHAITANYA KALBAG

# The queue melts... as soon as it forms.

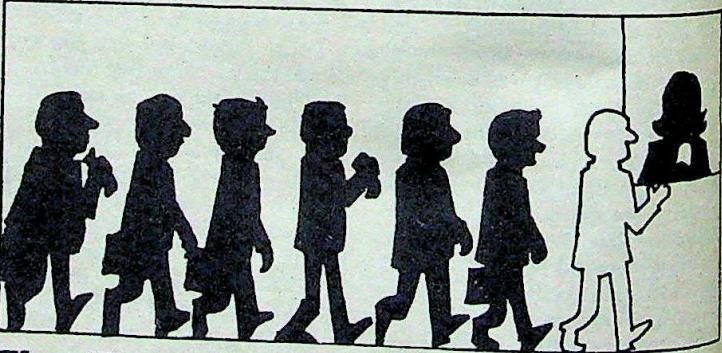
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# Chinese Chequers

KICKBACKS may be an established business practice in the rotten bourgeois world, but it's much the same even in the workers' paradise of the People's Republic of China. At least, so feels a group of Indian exporters of tobacco, the commodity of trade between the two countries who, after four years of euphoria in the booming business, have suddenly become disillusioned with the goings-on. Nowhere, the Chinese have virtually stopped buying tobacco, and all that they are trading with the Indian suppliers are abuses. The Chinese descended on the Indian tobacco market, mostly the preserve of East Asian buyers, in a big way in 1979. Alongside the claims of the public sector Trading Corporation (STC), the government-owned China National Native Silk and Animal By-products Import Export Corporation made, right from the beginning, no secret of its desire to do business with Indian private sector tobacco firms, all based in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh. The trade welcomed the development, and from an impressive 15,000 of initial purchases, exports to China reached the all-time high of 32,000 tonnes, at Rs 90 crore, in 1980-81.

**Compensation Claims:** However, the trade did not last beyond 1982 when, in a matter of months, the Chinese corporation urged further imports and slapped compensation claims worth nearly Rs 10 crore on six steady suppliers: ITC, Sri Jaya Lakshmi Tobacco Company and its two associates Sri Jaya Lakshmi Tobacco International and Gogineni Tobacco; Maddi Saiaha and Company, and Maddi Gururam and Company. The Chinese claimed that the consignments supplied by Indians had been found to contain substandard material far below the specifications agreed to by the parties.

Agreed with a glut in the world market over 30,000 tonnes of unsold export tobacco, the six companies at first reluctantly agreed one by one to pay compensation to the Chinese corporation in order not to lose further business, denying privately that they had defaulted in any way. They are committed to paying up, though the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has so far denied permission; according to RBI rules, up to 5 per cent of the contracted amount can be remitted as compensation or as a charge.

The biggest of the exporters to the Jaya Lakshmi-Gogineni group, with a corporate export turnover: Rs 30 crore,

headed by R. Sambashiva Rao, a Congress(I) member of the Rajya Sabha, has refused to take things lying down. In a letter to the Tobacco Board at Guntur, constituted under the Union Commerce Ministry, Rao stated he would not compromise "on unreasonable terms", thus washing his hands of the deal even if the RBI permitted him to meet the Chinese demand.

**Payment Refused:** Rao, in this case, is clearly going back on his own words. Last year, he went to Beijing and signed an agreement for payment of compensation of Rs 2.1 crore in US dollars to the Chinese corporation, along with the other Indian exporters. But while the others, at least on paper, did not renege on their commitment, Rao did. He even refused to apply for the RBI permission, and attributed the agreement with the Chinese to "blackmail". Rao's stubborn refusal to pay up so soured trade relations between the two countries that the Chinese withdrew completely from the Indian tobacco market even though the 1982 crop was plentiful. Indian exporters wooing the Chinese for fresh orders invariably point an accusing finger at Rao for this state of affairs.

Meanwhile, the India China Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCCI), founded in 1979 and comprising doctrinaire Sinophiles as well as sharp-eyed businessmen, issued strictures against Rao though he is not a member of the chamber. It charged him with "practising fraud on the Chinese" and thus besmirching the reputation of Indian businessmen in the "fast-growing Chinese market". In April this year, Santosh Chatterjee, a former Marxist activist and a Supreme Court advocate, who is the chairman of the ICCCI, visited Beijing on behalf of Sri Lakshmi Tobacco Company, another fast-growing Guntur firm, and circulated a written charge-sheet against Rao among Chinese tobacco officials.

**Allegations:** Rao broke his silence last month in a hard-hitting letter to M.C. Mahapatra, chairman of the Tobacco Board. The letter paraded allegations such as:

► the Chinese had themselves inspected the consignments at Kakindada, the port of delivery, and therefore the charge that these were substandard does not hold water;

► the Chinese had negotiated a substantial part of the deal through Tafu and Company, a Hong Kong-based outfit that has been wound up since, which in turn had sold these at a much higher price to the Chinese corporation; and, most serious of all;

► China had asked for kickbacks ranging from 15 to 38 per cent from the Indian exporters (that is, settling real prices that were much below the Indian Government-fixed minimum export price or MEP) adding an unwritten rider to the export deed that the 'cut' should be remitted to the Chinese corporation's account with the Bank of Tokyo, Hong Kong.

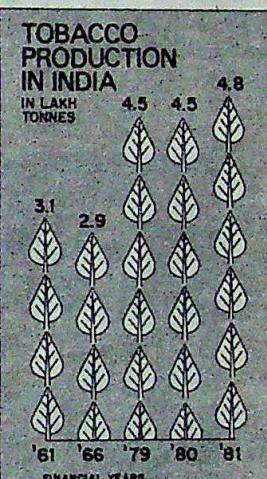
Rao couched his complaint in forthright language. He wrote: "China started

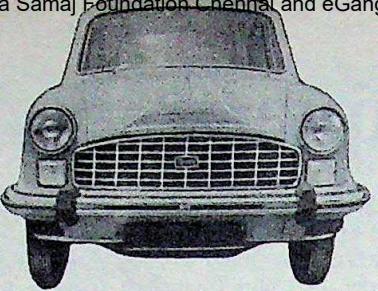
asking cut-backs from Indian suppliers ranging from 15 per cent to a maximum of 38 per cent in one case. In addition to negotiating the cut-backs, the Chinese asked the Indian suppliers to send a higher grade sample (to Tafu and Company) for their personal use.... Tafu and Company is said to have sold the tobacco to the Chinese corporation at the price of the higher grade tobacco. When this tobacco was distributed to the factories they found that the quality of the tobacco was not commensurate with the price they were asked to

pay...." Explaining himself to INDIA TODAY, Rao summed up: "We supplied only that grade of tobacco for which we were paid."

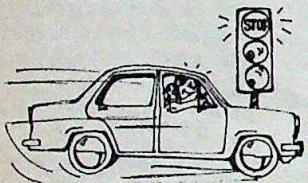
**I**F RAO'S allegations were true, he would have to explain how he paid the cut-back? "Certainly not from our Indian earnings," he says. Apparently, the slush money was paid from the margin of prices of the two grades, remitted to the company's foreign exchange account abroad. This again is an infringement of RBI rules, but Rao is silent on this. Said a senior official in the Commerce Ministry: "The Government of India is extremely worried about the wheeling and dealing that is most likely to have taken place in the tobacco export trade. The institution of a commission of inquiry looks like a certainty."

In Rao's case, however, the Chinese tried hard to adjust their claims against a 1982 consignment of 502 tonnes of tobacco, shipped to China on deferred payments terms and valued at Rs 1.23 crore. Rao had not received the amount, and when he said he was willing to let it be adjusted against the compensation that the Chinese had asked for, the corporation officials sent him a telex



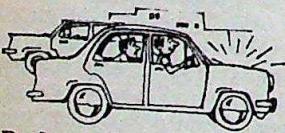


# Are your driving habits driving up your motoring costs ?



Do I drive in spurts of high speed?

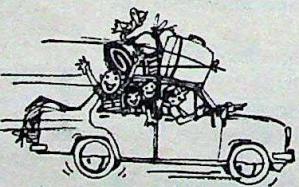
Start and stop driving may be unavoidable, specially in city traffic, but for the car it's always better to drive at a steady speed, anticipating traffic, avoiding sudden acceleration and braking. Try to limit cruising speeds to 40-50 Kmph. Drive on gears not brakes.



Do I race the engine while waiting to move?

A common tendency among impatient city motorists, it consumes extra fuel and heats up the engine too. Remember—it's always advisable to switch off if waiting for more than a minute.

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Overloading does not take its toll all at once, but it will show in deteriorating performance. Don't overload—and specially, carry no luggage on the roof when on the highway. Better for fuel consumption, better for car health.



Do I change gears smartly?

Driving on gears doesn't mean driving with a foot always on the clutch pedal, nor remaining in low gears as long as possible. Always drive on the appropriate gear : stay in low gears for the minimum time necessary, then change upwards.



How often do I use the choke and for how long? Unnecessary use drinks up lot of fuel—and also indicates the need for tuning up. Set the choke for real emergencies.



Am I careful about parking?

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Tobacco leaves being processed: curious dealings

him to hand over the original bills of "personally". According to RBI rules, original bills of lading can be routed only through authorised banks, never directly. "I don't know how the Chinese can be so audacious as to violate RBI rules," says Rao.

**Common Undertaking:** Wang Baolin, commercial attaché in the Chinese Embassy in New Delhi, dismissed Rao's charge as a "bit of imagination" and said that "we have a tacit settlement of all our trade disputes instead of going public". But, as the story progressed, some other exporters turned over to the Commerce Ministry that a common undertaking they had initially given to the Chinese, promising to pay large amounts as "commission" to the corporation's US dollar savings account in the Bank of Tokyo, Hong Kong. The sum number, too, is known to the Commerce Ministry now. Said one of these executives: "We want business with China; at the same time we don't want to be fleeced."

The remaining exporters, however, shelter behind the RBI rule not to allow payment of more than 5 per cent K.S. Ramakrishnan, ITC corporate manager in New Delhi: "We requested the RBI as well as the Union Finance Ministry to take a new look at the deal and to give us permission to pay a sum in excess of the statutory limit. We do not know how the Government reacts to it." The Centre has not shown its hand as yet. Replying to a Lok Sabha question in this year regarding the truth in the charge about the quality of Indian tobacco, Vishwanath Pratap Singh, Union commerce minister, called it "baseless".

After an official delegation headed by S. P. Singh, who held both Rao and the corporation guilty on various counts and Mahapatra: "Rao is responsible for consignments to China which did not conform to samples. The Chinese corporation too did quite a few wrong things,

but I don't want to disclose these now."

A Commerce Ministry official in New Delhi admitted that the Chinese might have "siphoned off" at least Rs 20 crore from the tobacco deals, all in foreign currency. But he held exporters like Rao squarely responsible for the "bungling" because of their "greed".

**Substantial Exports:** The Chinese, like 39 other importers of Indian tobacco, buy processed Indian virginia tobacco leaves to blend with local products for superior cigarettes.

However, except China, no other importing country has ever accused the Indians of supplying substandard material. In 1982-83, with the Chinese purchases dwindling to a measly 2,350 tonnes, India still exported 80,000 tonnes of tobacco, including 43,000 tonnes to the Soviet Union, 15,000 tonnes to the United Kingdom and 2,000 tonnes of high-quality leaves to Japan, valued together at Rs 230 crore. The Soviets paid at MEP, the British paid 10 to 15 per cent higher than the MEP and the Japanese paid 30 per cent higher. "The Chinese want to eat the pudding and have it too; they'll take cuts and yet expect quality," stormed Rao.

The Chinese, however, indicated that they had taken Rao's challenge seriously. Recently they turned down all overtures made by New Delhi for resumption of buying. Rao alleges that the Centre was pressurised by the Chinese to take action against him: in April, the Agmark Department, under the Union Rural Development Ministry, drew up proceedings against Rao as a result of which his three companies were debarred from handling tobacco in any form. He promptly secured a stay order from the Andhra Pradesh High Court, and the litigation continues.

**Accusations:** The most vociferous of Rao's critics is, of course, the ICCCI and its Chairman, Santosh Chatterjee. In his statement, circulated among members of Parliament, Chatterjee denounced Singh's statement in the Lok Sabha giving Rao a clean chit as "unfounded, inappropriate and untimely". It read: "The minister of commerce has committed clear contempt of the Lok Sabha by questioning the Chinese claim and denying the connection of a member of the Parliament."

Not all in the ICCCI agreed with Chatterjee's views. S.D. Pandey, former secretary-general of the ICCCI recently resigned his post in protest against Chatterjee's "blatantly one-sided advocacy of the Chinese cause" and attempts to "white-wash Chinese corruption". Pandey accompanied Chatterjee

to Beijing last April, where he noticed that the Chinese were trying to use the chamber as their mouthpiece. Chatterjee dismissed Pandey as an "impostor" and hinted at a "possible link" between him and Rao. "This may even be a deep Soviet plot," confides Chatterjee.

But the rumblings within the ICCCI are not likely to be easily wished away for, more than personal disagreement, they are caused by resentments within the trade circles over China's highly controversial business style. Most Indian exporters are optimistic about the vast Chinese market and are aware of the fact that when it comes to business 'isms' tend to become 'wasms'. As a matter of fact, they now want China to trade entirely through the STC. But they are doubtful if China will at all do it, because state-to-state trading is anathema to the fast-buck concept on which the Sino-Indian tobacco trade is built.

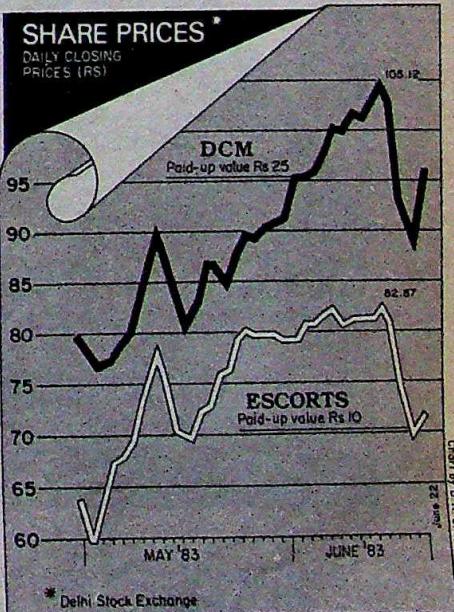
—SUMIT MITRA

## THE MARKETS

# Bearing Up

**T**HE SHARE market, like nature, abhors vacuum, and when the bulls depart it's time for the bears to move in. They now seem to be active in Delhi hammering down every scrip in sight, particularly Delhi Cloth Mills and Escorts, the new blue chips, but the bear grip might tighten on other scrips too, unless there is some good news to hold them at bay. There seems to be some uncertainty as regards remittances from non-residents which is precisely the kind of situation in which bears flourish and no wonder they are pushing their luck for all it's worth.

Apart from the non-resident factor,



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## ACTIVE STOCKS

	High 1983	Low	Close 20.6.83	Change on Firmer/light
Sindhi Sarabhai	17.75	13.25	15.50	0.75
Sheld Leyland	37.65	30.50	34.50	nil
Shriram Paints	35.00	30.50	35.00	0.50
Shree Cement	451.00	350.00	447.00	3.00
Shriram Copeco	30.00	25.00	29.00	0.50
Shriram Auto.	1,535.00	1,025.00	1,535.00	206.00
Shriram Rayon	48.00	37.40	46.30	0.80
Shriram Plywood	312.00	210.00	280.00	6.00
Shriram Textiles	26.50	18.05	26.50	1.20
Shriram India	56.90	47.10	56.10	2.70
Shriram Jute	93.50	57.50	85.00	14.50
Shriram Dyeing	36.45	23.75	26.75	(1.25)
Shriram Industries	31.10	26.00	30.90	0.80
Shriram Bond	246.50	190.00	209.00	(11.00)
Shriram Mills	235.00	195.00	235.00	10.00
Shriram Tyres	872.50	695.00	870.00	20.00
Shriram Spinning	63.25	51.00	63.00	1.50
Shriram India	99.00	84.00	96.00	1.00
Shriram Glass Mills	105.20	32.31	93.00	1.19
Shriram India	28.10	20.10	25.90	(0.90)
Shriram Hotels	29.00	20.00	26.75	1.13
Shriram Textiles	82.87	39.75	74.50	(5.00)
Shriram Specialties	70.50	60.50	70.00	nil
Shriram L. Williams	31.50	20.00	25.00	2.50
Shriram Fertilisers	23.00	18.05	22.50	1.40
Shriram Rayon	490.00	429.00	475.00	25.00
Shriram Aluminium	52.00	45.00	48.50	1.50
Shriram Lever	40.35	32.10	39.00	(1.00)
Shriram Motors	70.00	51.75	69.50	0.50
Shriram Motors	36.86	26.40	35.50	2.36
Shriram Aluminium	70	16.25	22.60	1.50
Shriram Cable	26.50	21.80	26.50	2.70
Shriram Explosives	27.40	22.00	26.60	1.50
Shriram Organics	35.00	25.50	33.00	0.50
Shriram Oxygen	35.00	30.40	34.75	0.25
Shriram Hand	87.00	78.00	84.00	(1.00)
Shriram Textiles	44.85	32.50	36.00	2.75
Shriram Synthetic	34.90	20.35	32.60	2.50
Shriram Tires	57.50	32.00	41.75	4.25
Shriram Auto.	87.00	70.00	84.00	nil
Shriram Engineering	68.10	57.30	64.80	0.40
Shriram (Madras)	163.00	68.00	97.00	20.00
Shriram & Ombro	24.50	18.00	24.50	1.00
Shriram Industries	73.00	52.00	69.00	0.50
Shriram Machines	27.30	14.00	26.40	0.35
Shriram Cars	61.50	42.50	58.25	(2.75)
Shriram & Mahindra	22.60	15.50	20.25	3.85
Shriram Rubber	66.00	42.00	64.00	(0.50)
Shriram Industries	35.37	22.69	30.62	nil
Shriram Iron	292.50	225.00	270.00	nil
Shriram Iron	24.50	19.75	24.00	0.50
Shriram Organic	26.00	20.35	25.50	1.00
Shriram Paper	207.50	160.00	180.00	5.00
Shriram Paper	1142.50	34.00	42.50	4.50
Shriram Auto.	48.40	40.20	48.40	0.40
Shriram	376.00	229.00	325.00	32.00
Shriram	46.00	36.00	44.75	0.75
Shriram	52.00	36.50	49.00	4.00
Shriram Road	183.00	154.00	169.50	12.00
Shriram Wallace	25.50	19.00	25.25	0.13
Shriram Fibres	42.00	32.20	41.25	(0.75)
Shriram PTC	41.50	27.75	39.81	2.00
Shriram Products	28.25	15.25	26.25	2.40
Shriram Chemicals	48.00	38.30	47.50	1.30
Shriram Textiles	67.00	49.50	55.00	0.50
Shriram	322.50	237.00	315.00	(6.00)
Shriram Investments	455.00	350.00	436.00	20.00
Shriram Carbide	53.00	38.00	50.75	(0.75)
Shriram Maria Black	18.00	16.00	17.50	1.00
Shriram	25.75	21.50	24.40	(0.50)
Shriram	26.50	22.0	24.20	(0.30)
Shriram Agro	317.00	262.00	317.00	3.00
Shriram	21.50	15.00	21.00	2.00
Shriram Trust (Sale)	32.50	22.40	31.00	1.25
Shriram	14.10	13.20	14.10	nil

there is the question of inflation. The wholesale price index has been edging up by a rate equivalent to around 12 per cent a year, which is enough to upset most calculations. When prices rise, two things happen. Firstly, costs go up and profits decline. Secondly, overall demand slackens and expansion becomes difficult. On either score, companies slow down their expansion plans, generally because they are not sure of selling what they produce. The scrip thus loses its attraction both ways.

**Continuing Trend:** The only silver lining in the clouds is the report that industrial production picked up in March—we are always three months behind in our statistics—and the trend has been continuing. This was of course before inflation raised its head but business circles say that most companies have not rolled back their production targets and are in fact confident of taking the recent price rise in their stride. In fact, many businessmen believe that inflation is not such a bad thing, and often does wonders for their profits. After last year's long spell of credit squeeze, a small rise in prices, provided it does not go out of control, may help push up overall demand and ultimately profits.

June is always a slack month for company reports but quite a few company chairmen have spoken at annual general meetings but their words lack cheer. There is no shortage of money—the World Bank is almost on target with its aid offer this year—and the foreign exchange situation is reasonably hopeful. But there are doubts about the food situation and also about the political situation in general. But this is a passing phase, though bears are making most of it.

There are one or two bright patches in the grey skies. Shipping company shares seem to be in the limelight again, as world trade is on the bend and there are reports of considerable improvement in the situation. The shares gained nearly 20 per cent in May though they are still below prices at this time last year. Tea plantation shares are also not doing badly, though these shares do not seem to be very popular in the north. Truck company shares should do better this year and so perhaps those of fertiliser companies.

Perhaps the best thing to do is to get rid of scrips that are obviously over-priced and can come tumbling down any day. The next best thing is to invest in new issues since they are going at rock bottom prices, with virtually no risk of depreciation. Unfortunately there are not too many new issues in the offing right now, but when the market is so high, it is best to leave it alone for a while and look for some pickings nearer the bottom.

## WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

Country	Unit & Currency	TT Selling Rates (Rs)	TT Buying Rates (Rs)
Australia	1 As \$	8.9475	8.8509
Austria	100 As Sch.	57.4585	56.8344
Bahrain	1 Dinar	27.0352	26.7537
Bangladesh	100 Taka	8.2463	8.1511
Canada	1 Can \$	8.3072	8.2168
Egypt	1 Egp £	12.0494	11.9606
France	1 Fr Franc	1.3447	1.3304
Hong Kong	1 HK \$	1.4335	1.4156
Indonesia	100 Rupiah	1.0275	1.0199
Iran	1 Rial	11.7737	11.6673
Italy	100 Lt Lira	0.6817	0.6744
Japan	100 Jap Yen	4.2931	4.2467
Kenya	1 K Shilling	1.1899	1.1792
Kuwait	1 Dinar	34.7957	34.4121
Malaysia	1 ML S.	4.3936	4.3459
Mauritius	1 Rupee	0.9882	0.8916
Nepal	1 Rupee	0.6956	0.6905
Netherlands	1 D Gld.	3.6147	3.5762
Pakistan	1 Rupee	0.7994	0.7723
Singapore	1 Sing S	4.8213	4.7679
Spain	100 Sp Pt	7.1121	7.0360
Sri Lanka	1 Rupee	0.4441	0.4339
Sweden	1 Sw Kr	1.3388	1.3245
Switzerland	1 Sw Franc	4.8974	4.8447
Tanzania	1 T Sch.	1.0520	1.0443
Thailand	100 Baht	44.4116	44.0102
UK	1 Pound	15.5885	15.4476
USA	1 US \$	10.1725	9.9900
UAE	1 Dihram	2.7196	2.6995
USSR	1 Rouble	14.0106	13.9076
W. Germany	1 DM	4.0421	3.9993

These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo, Ltd., New Delhi and quoted between the banks on 23.6.83

## ECONOMIC TRENDS

	Latest	Change on month
<b>PRICES</b>		
ET Commodity Price Index*		
June 20, 1983	264.0	0.9
Cereals	262.3	(3.9)
Chemicals	369.9	7.4
Industrial Fibres	191.7	(0.8)
Metals	359.8	1.4
Sugar	217.5	(6.7)
Textile Yarn	217.9	0.4
Vegetable Oils	357.3	46.2
Gold, standard,		
June 20, 1983	1,805.00	(20.00)
(Rs per 10 gm)		
Silver, .999		
June 20, 1983	3,285.00	(315.00)
(Rs per kg)		
<b>SHARES</b>		
ET Share Price Index*		
June 20, 1983	278.4	14.4
Cement	272.5	(0.8)
Chemicals	213.6	9.5
Engineering	496.9	21.5
Fertilisers	217.6	11.7
Man-made Fibres	406.9	15.0
Paper	527.5	30.5
Rubber Goods	184.0	7.6
<b>MONEY</b>		(per cent)
Money Supply, May 20, 1983	1.4	
Bank Deposits	0.8	
Foreign Exchange Assets	14.6	

\* 1969-70 = 100

RAMNAD EASWARAN

# A Giant Of Rhythm



THE KARNATAKA Sangeeta Sabha joined the music lovers of Delhi recently in felicitating Ramnad Easwaran, the mridangam wizard, for his three decades of service to the cause of music at a glittering function at the Mavalankar Hall. Dr V.K. Narayana Menon, chairman of the Sangeet Natak Akademi presided over the function. Easwaran received fulsome eulogies, stood frail and straight, buried under a heap of garlands of rose and sandalwood and accepted a purse of Rs 20,001, a shawl and a citation, while a packed hall cheered and roared in honour of a giant of rhythm.

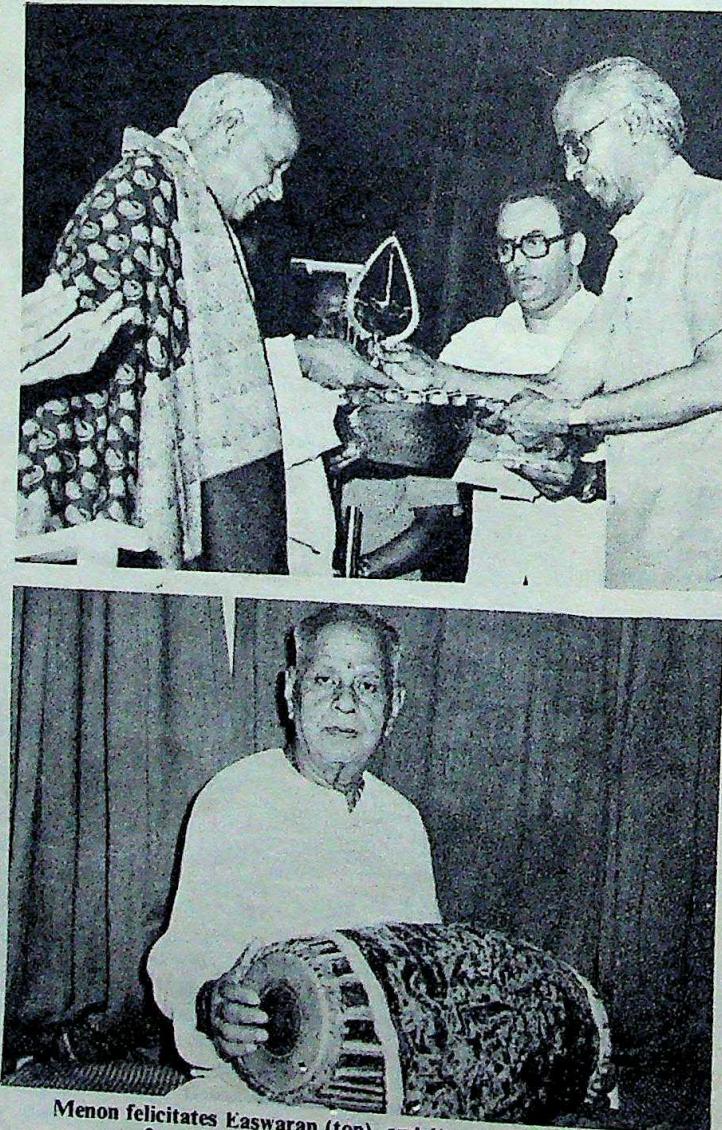
It was in the '60s during the visit to India of the king of classical jazz Duke Ellington that Barret Dean hailed Easwaran as a "drummer with a metronome in his brain". It is the system of 'bols', a type of mnemonics that makes the Indian *tal* system the most complex and unique system of rhythm anywhere in the world. And this is true whether it is the tabla and the pakhawaj of the Hindustani system or the mridangam and the ghatam or the kanjira of the Carnatic system, that you are talking about.

It is this system of 'bols' for example, that makes it possible to construct a rhythm cycle of say five and one half beats and to syncopate across it in measures that are symmetrical two and three quarter beats and make it possible to lose halves and quarters along the way and pick them up later into added wholes that build into marvels of mathematical elegance and beauty.

**Rich Technique:** Into Hindustani music's somewhat less obsessed *tal* system, Easwaran can be said to have introduced through his long association with giants like Pandit Chaturlal and Ravi Shankar techniques of rhythm fractions and phrasing that have enriched Hindustani *tal* rendition. As Pandit Ram Narayan says: "My brother Chaturlal got his

insight into the techniques of the south through his association with Ramnad Easwaran."

Much honoured already by the Sahitya Kala Parishad, Delhi, and by the prestigious Music Academy, Madras, Easwaran plays with time on the mridangam with the abandon of a child with a meccano set of infinite pieces. He is able to incorporate into a standard rhythm cycle countless odd and teasing fractions that lose and gain time with planned irregularity across the cycle, the vanished fractions add and subtract themselves as he plays on till they arrive dead on the opening beat with the inevitability of an eclipse.



Menon felicitates Easwaran (top), and Easwaran at a concert

Easwaran, born in Kerala's district, had his 'arangetram' before that of Ramnad and has played with every cian of note of the Carnatic school, Chembai and the singer Varadacharya was known as the 'Tiger', with the tenor M.D. Ramanathan introducing their concerts the curious witchcraft and even fractions of rhythmic variations that raised each of these sumptuous to the level of an experience.

**Central Role:** Ramnad Easwaran's significant contribution to music was in his association of over 30 years with All India Radio's (AIR) Vadya Vrinda. Dr Narayana Menon brought him in and his part in the evolution of the Vadya Kuchery which has now become a staple for presentation before visiting heads of states. No complex or esoteric intonations are needed, as the drums speak for themselves, straight and answering thud of the heart.

Ravi Shankar, for several years the director of Vadya Vrinda, says: "I have always admired Easwaran's calculative and precise sense of rhythm which inspired immensely for a number of choral compositions I composed over the years with the Vadya Vrinda."

The Tala Vadya Kuchery, a concert of an ensemble of several percussion instruments such as the mridangam, the ghatam, the kanjira, the tabla, the pakhawaj and the moorsing, play separately and together in an intricate choreography of split-second time. Beginning with a slow and spacious pace, a well-known instrument follows in turn, in cutting up this spacious panse into fine slivers, increasing organisation and complexity, locking and locking time sequences, building up a strong rhythmic tension that plays the instruments with a feeling almost lent to an ecstatic pain, the pieces finally fit together in an explosive resolution.

Now a spry 70-year-old, Easwaran's prodigious talent in fashioning new forms and startling relationships often has him bed as the maestro who plays the mridangam with his hands rather than with his feet.

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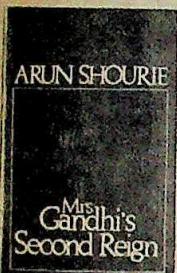
# One-Man Crusade

MRS GANDHI'S SECOND REIGN

by ARUN SHOURIE

Vikas

Price: Rs 150; Pages: 532



ENDOWED with the gift of indignation, so rare among our political commentators, Arun Shourie's latest book tells the drama of a slow burning fuse at the end of which stands the edifice of Indian polity. The fuse can still be doused if the citizenry is aware of the fire and of the pretensions of the fire fighters, namely, our rulers. Since the fuse is already lit, Shourie's apparently uninterested in telling how, when and by whom it was ignited.

Shourie, like Camus or Orwell seeks to unmask the failures, deceptions, hypocrisy and ritualistic battles that give life to our ruling establishment. And, of all the critics, he is the most irrepressible and stimulating. The fifty and odd essays here portray the grist of India's political mill: sycophancy,

chicanery, corruption, circuses, pretensions, lack of national purpose, all-round subversion of institutional framework, and what have you. After going through five hundred and odd pages of so much mush of politics, the deeds of the *natakmandli*, of *subedars*, *kotwals* and *kazis*, the reader begins to tire.

**Buried Message:** The central argument — more appropriately, message — of the book is buried in a sentence here and a paragraph there. In fact, the book contains a good book, fighting to get out, but unable to do so. After conceding that Mrs Gandhi is neither the cause nor the solution of all that is meaningless and damaging in Indian polity, Shourie gets lost in studying the skin eruptions resulting from a deeper malaise. Only in two and half essays towards the fag-end of the collection, does he come to, what I suspect is, the real starting point — that the road to deliverance lies through greater participation (or repoliticisation) of the average citizen who still adheres to humane values, but chooses to sulk rather than act.

One effect of Shourie's writing for a daily has been the hit and run quality of his pieces; the breathlessness of daily journalism has not given him time to reflect on the root causes of change. Such as it is, the main

thrust of his analysis is independent historical and psychological forces that shaped Indian polity. The problem of understanding the rapport between a reign and its support base lies in determining how its appeal meets the historical and psychological needs of its supporters. To explain why a certain amount of animal vigour and coarseness of the rulers have come to be seen as desirabilities by the electorate. Also, why a who fought a long battle against the tacit paternalism of the Raj and who *culte du moi* in 1977 opted for it after years? Why the prospect of bumblingocracy forced people to a psychology of greater participation? Or, the historical need of a people in need of alliance for breaching the layers of power of a suffocating stratum just above them. A majority of Indian voters in 1984 Gandhi was a necessity and the one she may still be considered a necessity in 1985, though no longer an inspiration.

That explains the sympathetic that Shourie touches in his readers, gives them a vicarious satisfaction of seeing all that is ignoble in polity, yet not stir them because the outcome of the battle is uncertain and its cost prohibitive. One wonders who fears Shourie more — victims or his admirers? He hurts and discomfits the other.

—R.K. SRIVASTAVA

GANDHI

## Fringe Benefit

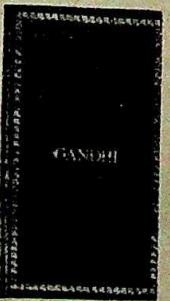
NO ONE would have been more pleased than the Mahatma himself about the awakened interest in India and on all that he stood for following Richard Attenborough's epic film. But what would have pleased him even more are the little-known spin-offs that Attenborough's efforts have inspired. One major beneficiary have been the blind, thanks to the laudable efforts of Voltas, the Tata-owned company, which has been a pioneer in its efforts to make life more livable for the handicapped in India. Voltas has now capitalised on the Gandhi phenomenon to bring the Mahatma's message to the blind.

Back in January, Voltas sponsored the premiere of *Gandhi* in aid of the National Association for the Blind (NAB) and managed to raise Rs 7.5 lakh for the cause. Not content with that success, Voltas embarked upon the NAB-Voltas Gandhi Book Project, a collectors' edition of some of the Mahatma's most relevant quotations.

**Non-profit Project:** Printed on long-life parchment paper and bound in hand-spun, hand-woven silk, the 200-page book is a non-profit project aimed at aiding the blind. Priced at Rs 150, the idea behind the project is that every book sold is accompanied by a special gift set for the blind consisting of a braille edition of the book and braille writing aids.

The buyer can either receive the set along with the book or have it sent to the NAB directly.

Obviously a lot of time and effort have gone into the making of the book and its contents. Each page contains a quote from Gandhi on subjects ranging from truth and emancipation of women to untouchability and poverty and, of course, violence. The quotes contain some of his best-remembered words: "They may torture my body, break my bones, even kill me; then they will have my dead body, not my obedience," and others not so well remembered but relevant today: "A government that is evil has no room for good men and women except in its prisons".



**Last Thoughts:** The book ends with his uncanny premonition that he was fated to die by an assassin's bullet and thoughts on death. "I do not want to die of a creeping paralysis of my faculties, of a defeated man," he said shortly before death; "An assassin's bullet may put an end to my life. I would welcome it."

Then, a few days later, he remarked, "I shall be content to be written down as an impostor if my lips utter a word of anger or abuse against my assailant in the last moment." On January 28, 1948, he said: "If I am to die by the bullet of a mad man, I must do so smiling. There must be no anger within me. Good must be on my heart and on my lips"; a prophecy that was fulfilled two days later when he died uttering his last words.

The book is, in a sense, his final will and testament to the people of India, legacy of a giant to the 700-odd million people who now need, more than ever, other time, to remember his words and be inspired by them.

—DILIP DEY

# Home Truths

*DESTINATION MAN: TOWARDS A NEW WORLD*

S.K. DEY  
S.K. Publications, 1982  
Rs 75: Pages: 154

*Destination Man*  
A New World

SUNDAY

AS A little boy, S.K. Dey dreamed of building a better India. It was a dream he shared with prime minister Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi as they struggled to free their country from British rule. To their people they held promise—to "remove the conditions that create poverty and provide all the opportunity to work and earn to meet their basic human needs".

Community development, inaugurated on Nehru's birthday (October 2, 1952) was the step in fulfilling that promise.

*Destination Man* records Dey's personal commitment to that promise. It zooms in to turning point in Dey's life when he changed from being a seeker of the material in life to a crusader for the poor of India. "Poverty is a curse," he writes, "a virus lethal prolonged in its infection and malignancy more dreaded than cancer, the curse of the world. It is a strange paradox that offers in response to human labour is ostentation, extravagance and living by a small minority of

book ends who that he bullet and not want to faculties partly before it may put an end." From an education in the US, the book traces Dey's return to India and his early experiences as a professional engineer working in a foreign company. The early chapters are classic in the insights—so universal they provide into Dey's first venture into the foreign US culture vastly different from the life he knew as a village boy in now Bangladesh.

**Philosophy:** In 1947, when India gained its independence, Nehru called for S.K. Dey was one of the first to heed the call by resigning from a high-salary job that assured the good life to volunteers, gratis, for the development of India. Nehru tested Dey's transformation and commitment by offering him the chance of building a new township at Nilokheri, Dey's philosophy that

emphasised, among other things, equality for all, self-fulfilment, education for all children and religion as a private affair. Dey concluded from his Nilokheri experience that "prosperity in an open society cannot be insulated. Life must grow from within, if it is to endure, it cannot be imposed from without. India has to build with the efforts of the people themselves."

With one aim in mind—community development—the new Government of India faced the monumental task of creating a network that would reach out to all of India's 550,000 villages. The primary objective was to stimulate participation of people at the village level. Said Dey: "Economic democracy and political democracy cannot go far unless special stress is laid on the uplifting of the weaker sections of the community as in a joint family."

**Abrupt Halt:** But community development as a national programme died with the death of Nehru in 1964. Dey records his last meeting with Nehru: "One evening in late April 1964, near midnight, there came a call from Nehru asking me to see him in his study. Nehru was sitting at his desk, uncharacteristically sad and melancholy. Soon after my arrival, Nehru asked me softly without lifting his head, 'Tell me, my dear fellow, what is happening to your Panchayati Raj institutions? Do you think they can withstand an organised pressure on them, if the system were to be reversed?'

'I am sorry, Panditji,' I replied, 'the system has spread out to the majority of states. Others also will follow; but they have not received the whole-hearted support of the powers that be at the top except in Gujarat and Maharashtra. I can claim with certainty that no power can bring about reversal such as can last long in these two states. It would take longer in others....' 'You have no time, you have no time, dear friend. Take it from me, you will have no time,' was the reaction from Nehru."

In January 1966, when Mrs Gandhi formed her new government, she discontinued the Ministry of Community Development. "With this transaction," Dey concluded, "community development was buried—perhaps forever."

Emphasis shifted, instead, to the development of Indian agriculture—and it is a great achievement to have produced enough food to now meet the market demands of all its people and have some 70 million tonnes in storage. But how can India say it is self-sufficient in food when 50 per cent of the rural

people and 60 per cent of the urban people go almost completely hungry every day? India's poor are today more intensely exploited by the elite of India than they were under British rule. One cannot but wonder what progress India would have made if its political leaders had Nehru's commitment to community development.

**International Research:** In October 1966, after the abolition of the Ministry of Community Development, Dey resigned from the Government of India and went—under the auspices of the United Nations Development Programme—on a fact-finding mission on rural development. The research only increased an already sharp insight into the workings of poverty. In *Destination Man*, Dey wrote: "What emerges inevitably from all the aid-giving efforts is the bias of resources and efforts both towards the few because of the pressures the few can exert on their governments and agencies, whether bilateral, multilateral, or voluntary."

Of US aid, Dey remains uncertain. "His (Reagan's) role on the world stage has yet to be seen," he writes, "if the arrogance of his associates, his bias towards arms spending and against welfare budgets and his active support to multinational programmes for the developing nations are any portents, there are much harder times ahead."



Dey: personal commitment

It is a strange paradox, he says, that aid from Uncle Sam, in the shape it is presented, has always left country after country in the grip of communist ideology. An echo resounds in the world with increasing vehemence: "You wish for communism, ask the affluent Uncle to step in and all else will follow as direct logic." The relations between the two superpowers are heading, as the chapter says, towards a "Crisis of Crises".

Dey concludes *Destination Man* with a hope—that "man, instead of materials, becomes the focus". Only then, "poverty vanishes, freedom takes its place, and freedom is the most vital prerequisite to culture and all creative faculties."

Yes, *Destination Man* has a message for all who seek peace. To get the full impact of this wide-ranging analysis of our troubled world, you must be prepared to read, reflect and reread the book. If you do, you will be richly rewarded.

—DR DOUGLAS ENSMINGER

Dr Ensminger is Professor Emeritus, Rural Sociology, University of Missouri, Columbia. He served in India as the Ford Foundation representative between 1951 and 1970.

SMITHA

# The Silken Touch

**T**HE CONTRAST between the two could hardly be more striking. One, a shaven-haired ascetic with seemingly insatiable political ambitions. The other, a generously-endowed sex object whose ambition stops at the bottom line on her bank book. And yet, the two have much in common. Both have careers that are deeply rooted in the southern cinematic scene and both belong to Andhra Pradesh. N.T. Rama Rao, Andhra Pradesh chief minister, and Silk Smitha, the box-office bombshell, are charting courses beyond the Vindhya that have made them the most talked about twosome in south India.

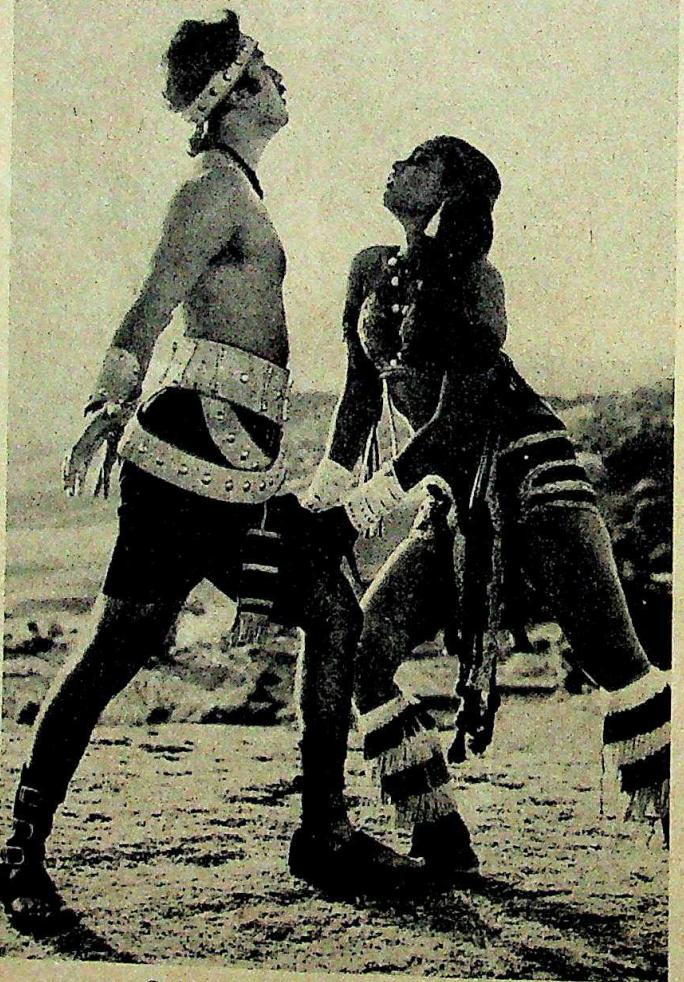
NTR, of course, has already achieved national status and silk Smitha, whose first Hindi film *Sadma* shows every indication of being a hit, is not trailing far behind. But if NTR has a head start over Smitha in the popularity stakes it is merely a case of mind over matter—NTR's mind and Smitha's matter. And does Smitha matter! Every third Tamil film released last year had Smitha's sensuous and skimpily clad figure on prominent display. Each time she appears on the screen, the wolf-whistles and foot-stomping appreciation can be heard all the way in Kodambakkam, south India's Hollywood. Producers pursue her like crusaders after the Holy Grail. Her house in Madras is fast becoming a tourist attraction.

A mob in Madras, spotting her on the street, almost stripped her naked before she was rescued. The madness is not confined to Madras. A Kerala tycoon's son had to be returned to his father through police help after he ran away from home with an urge to marry Smitha. Each day, the legend grows longer and the stories more unbelievable. The most recent example: on location, Smitha threw away a half-eaten apple which an enterprising producer promptly recovered and auctioned on the spot for Rs 300 among a group of fans watching the shooting.

**Uninhibited:** Smitha, of course, does her little bit to nudge the legend along its desired

route. Recently, she arrived at a friend's wedding reception dressed in the skimpy cabaret costume that has almost become her trade mark. Needless to say, the wedding turned into pandemonium and Smitha had to hastily explain to the embarrassed host that she had no time to change and had come straight from shooting.

All that clearly proves that Smitha's biggest assets are those given to her by a ge-



Smitha with Kamal Haasan in *Sadma*

norous quirk of nature. She is hardly beautiful or even attractive in the accepted sense. She is short and dark and her acting ability is severely limited. But she has what currently sells—sex appeal, and in abundance. A lascious figure, bedroom eyes, sensual lips and a husky voice; and she uses all of them to devastating effect. Says Balu Mahendra, the cameraman and director who gave her the

big break in films: "Smitha can answer a question like 'Shall we go to the temple to pray' and it will sound like 'shall we go to love'. It is that seductive quality that makes her the phenomenon she is."

That and also undoubtedly the fact that Smitha has absolutely no moral hang-ups about sharing her physical attributes with her fans on the screen. Producers whose movies have flopped have been known to

film a sizzling 10-minute cabaret number, append it to the film and release it, assured of success. This is a stereotype which casts the same seductive role over again, but the fact is, neither does she. Her only complaint to *India Today* last fortnight was that she had not been ages since I wore a

**Meteoric Rise:** But eventually her body talks, and talks money. In a comparatively short space of three years since she unclad onto the south Indian film scene, her rise has been meteoric. Her budget in cers currently wanting to get her up for their films have told the earliest free date in 1985. Till then, she reportedly signed up for around films at fees that are, incidentally, higher than any of the top stars. For a 10-minute cabaret number, she reportedly charged in the region of Rs 15,000. Still the offers—and the offers—keep brimming over. According to "Silk" top male star Kamal Haasan: "Smitha is the most sensational happening down south. She has got her name to become a rage." So all shop owners in Tamil periodicals have given her more coverage than MGR or the drought stricken *Silk*. But

Says Anandan of *Filmfare*: "The vernacular press has gone crazy. She has been on the cover of all Tamil publications and any story on her is guaranteed sell-out." Meanwhile, a cottage industry is frenetically churning out Smitha perfumes, hair pins, bindis and brassieres.

That is certainly a heady climb for a girl who is just 22 and came to Madras

five years ago hoping to make it as a extra! She arrived in Madras along with impoverished paddy-farmer father and family had set up home in the Junior Ar- Colony near Koddambakkam where extras and bit part actors hang out. Malayalam films were going through a "blue" period and everybody was on the bandwagon including a photographer from Cochin called Eastman. Eastman was scouting for a fresh unknown face—and figured a Malayalam version of *Last Tango*. His search stopped short at Vijaymala who could neither speak Malayalam Tamil but even at 17 had that undefinable quality called oomph. Re-

Eastman: "Vijaymala was a sultry lass without poise or grace. The result:

Eastman's next step was to decide for Vijaymala's role. Deciding that there were many Vijays and Malas lit-complaint to the cutting room floor, he signed her screen name to and signed her up for his

Rise: But *Inayethedi* (In search of her body) for the princely sum of Rs 150. *Inayethedi* was just a short spurt of the sleazy soft porn since she was that flooded the south after I.V. Sasi's *Her Meteoric Rise* and was made on a shoe-budget in black and white. It flopped the day after its release. Five years later it has been released under the name *Nights* and is a smash hit because of the couple of scenes. Says Eastman: "I had no reservations doing nude scenes. She strip in front of the entire film—without batting an eyelid."

**Major Break:** Smitha was cast to "Silk" Smitha after Kamal Hassan in *Vandichakkaram* in most sensible south. She got her first major role—and the name stuck till it was changed to the more mouth-watering Silk. But around 20 trade movies later she was cast another body, mechanically doing and bump routine, when she stumbled across the key to stardom in the form of talented Balu Mahendra. Mahendra saw her simmering potential and cast her as the nymphomaniac wife of a school principal in *Moondram Pirai*. Clad in hot pants little else she set out to seduce male

extras and bit part actors hang out. intensity that the movie just had to be a hit. It ran for an entire year in a Madras theatre and Silk Smitha had arrived. Says Mahendra: "She was splendid in the film and what happened to her later will go down as an important chapter in the south Indian film history."

Since then, there has been only one direction for Smitha—upwards. Says the leading movie mogul of the south, K. Balaji: "She can't act for nuts. Neither can she dance very well. But her presence is titillating for the audience and she has become an essential ingredient for commercial movies." Just how vital is demonstrated by the fact that in the last three years she has appeared

in 75 films in all the four south Indian languages and is rated commercially above even Rajnikant and Kamal Hassan, which, in the male-dominated south Indian cinema, is miraculous.

Ambitious: Smitha herself is candid about her success and her limited ambition. "I had the right breaks and Lady Luck on my side," she said, adding, "but this is just a temporary phase. There have been superstars like Jyothilakshmi and Jayamalini who were on top till I came along. Now it is just my turn, that's all. My policy is to make as much money as possible and get wider recognition by acting in Hindi films." Not a bad philosophy for a 22-year-old who can barely read and write. She does have one other ambition—to act opposite Amitabh Bachchan. "Just one dance sequence with Amitabh and I would be the happiest girl in the world," she gurgles like a love-struck schoolgirl. Now, with her recent success in *Sadma*, even that does not seem unlikely. Her private life, however, is straight out of one of her movie roles. The entire south is buzzing with gossip

about her reported affair with Dr Babu, a doctor-turned-businessman who is married with two children. Smitha refused to discuss the affair except to say: "I hate film men. The only person who understands me is Dr Babu. We may get married in a year or so." The bearded Dr Babu now acts as her manager.

Considering the kind of roles she is cast in, Smitha's most torrid affair, however, has been with the censors who claims have singled her out for the scissor treatment. Recently, the battle took an amusing turn when Smitha called a press conference and stated that the only way to stop the censors from chopping her scenes was if she married one of them. Later she shrugged it off as a joke but the censors were not amused. Retorted Sadananda Menon, a member of the advisory panel of the Censor Board: "I think it might be better if she married the information and broadcasting minister." K. Ramalakshmi, noted Telugu writer and former Censor Board member, was the least amused. "She has vulgarised Tamil cinema and changed the art of dancing to crude gyrations and close-ups of her exposed thighs and high lifts (sic) of her breasts. She is not only an insult to Andhra but to womanhood as well," she storms. But considering the manner in which the fans are flocking to see those exposed thighs and high-lift breasts, it is a one-sided battle. A sultry Smitha with all cylinders firing is more than a match for even the most conservative of scissors-wielding censors. Millions of drooling fans offer enough proof of that.

—DILIP BOBB with SREEDHAR PILLAI in Madras



(Clockwise from top) Smitha with Balu Mahendra; early in her career; and in *Vandichakkaram*

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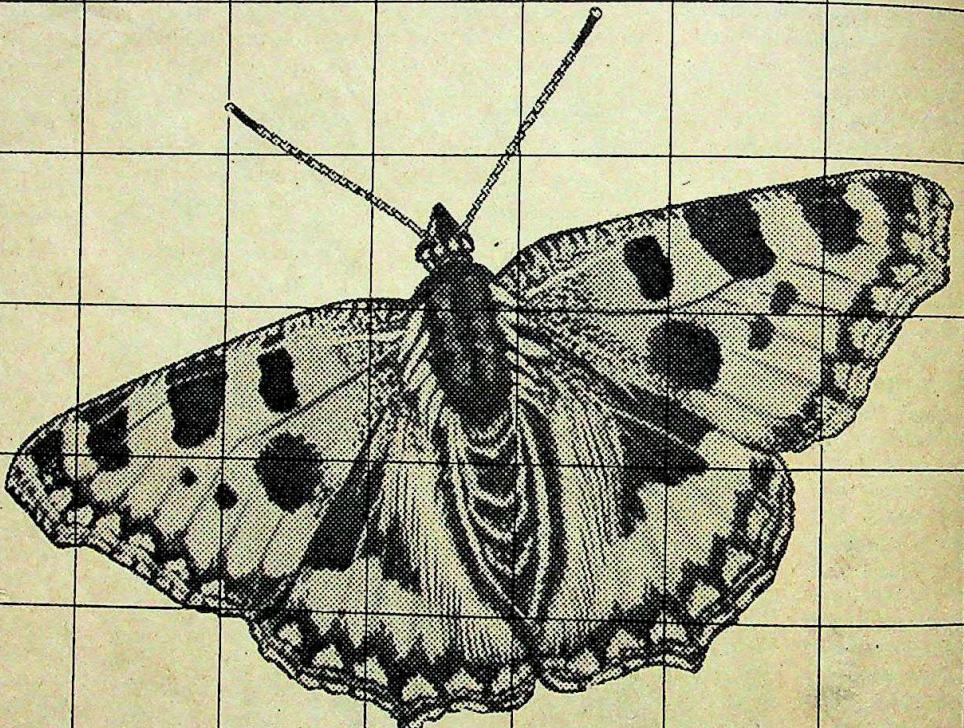
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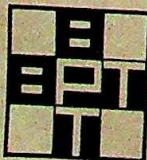
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# Starting Shots

DASASANUDU  
N.T. Rama Rao, Sarada, Radha,  
Ravi Gopala Rao  
and Screenplay: N.T. Rama Rao  
Dir: N.T. Rama Rao

WILL the real N.T. Rama Rao please stand up? Not likely. *Chandasasanudu*, NTR's latest film released May 27, abundantly proves that the star-turned-politician is squeezing the life out of both his worlds. Opening in over 50 theatres in Andhra Pradesh, it promises to be a big money-spinner as a great political boost for the hero. When he decided to make the film for a nation release, little did NTR imagine it would be catapulted to a seat of great power. So, when 93 theatres screen-

ned *Chandasasanudu*, four months after he became chief minister, there was reason for the Telugu Desam Party to celebrate their hero once again.

The film—a typical formula one—is part of the poor stock of commercial Indian cinema. The story line is wafer thin. NTR plays a dual role—that of the autocratic zamindar Harischandra Prasad and of his rebellious nephew Raja. Prasad is the chandasanudu, which means a dictator or man of iron, and the unquestioned head of the village. As the feudal stereotype, he drives out his sister Bhuvaneswari (thrice Urvashi award winner Sarada) when she decides to marry Satyam (Jaggiah), a left-wing labour leader. Their conflict sharpens when she organises farm workers to fight her oppressive brother. Raja, her son (also played by NTR) joins the workers in their struggle against the dictatorial zamindar.

NTR and Radha in *Chandasasanudu*: crudely simple



**Self-Portrayal:** For those who might dismiss this as a crudely simple film complete with double roles and Madrasi *masala* have not taken into account the ingenuity of the story writer—N.T. Rama Rao. There is a scene where Raja is tied to a post and flogged in Prasad's courtyard while his mother and uncle watch. Then with sheer muscle power, Raja snaps the binds. The scene is pure NTR, just as the film from beginning to end, belongs to NTR. Nobody is left unhappy in the best NTR tradition. One is, however, left wondering what the politician hero is trying to convey.

There are long winded speeches on exploitation and injustice and the self-respect of women. Raja even describes Duryodhana as the first socialist and fighter for equality in the country. Which does not, however, stop Raja from teasing his beloved Rani—photographing her as she climbs out of a swimming pool and then running around a tree with her sari. No attention is paid to detail and the level of direction is terrible.

**Curious Mix:** The film, although it is a sloppy patchwork quilt of stunts and sentiment, will still pull in NTR fans, trained as they are, to his cosmetic realism, stereotypes and clichés. Perhaps, it is in keeping with this glamour tradition that the revolutionary Bhuvaneswari appears in rustling silks while working with the tenant-cultivators and farm workers. There are other revolutionaries in not-so-subtle red shirts and there is hip-swinging by Jayamalini. But the film remains poor political propaganda.

And propaganda is probably what NTR intended it to be anyway. During the shooting last year, he had plainly said: "This film shows my true character as a strong-willed and just man and is intended for release a couple of weeks before the legislative assembly elections." And although two of the seven songs from the film were released on cassette by the Telugu Desam Party during the electioneering, the strident campaign kept NTR and his party busy, upset shooting schedules and delayed the release of the film.

Now that *Chandasasanudu*—the last film he has acted in—has been released, it is expected to do good business without reaching block-buster proportions. With the film being distributed by NTR's own company managed by son Saikrishna, "presented" by his eldest son Jayakrishna, the director of photography being another son Mohanakrishna and production controller yet another son Hare Krishna, Telugu filmdom's first family is expected to rake in huge profits, perhaps more than what they had imagined. *Chandasasanudu* is significantly Rama Rao's first film to be released after he became chief minister. And if it is memorable, it is mainly because it is his last.

—AMARNATH K. MENON



**Khushwant Singh: malice towards him!**

■ Nobody could accuse Khushwant Singh of yellow journalism though his "Malice Towards One And All" syndicated column does smack of malice at times. But yellow journalism? That apparently is another matter. Last fortnight, the 68-year-old doyen of the Indian press found himself lodged among sundry animals and plants at Delhi airport's quarantine section. Singh was forced to spend three uncomfortable days there when a beady-eyed health inspector discovered that he had not taken a yellow fever injection before setting off for Guatemala to attend an international media meet. Singh, ho-

wever, was in good company. Apart from the pets and the plants were the Lok Sabha speaker, Balram Jakhar, and the ambassadors of south Korea and Nigeria who had also violated health requirements.

Singh looked no worse for wear when he emerged from his ordeal. "Although it was like being in jail, I had my bottles of duty-free scotch and plenty of *Playboys* and *Penthouses* to keep me company," he announced with a broad grin. But the event also put the boot on the other foot. Instead of poking fun at other people in similar situations—as he does fairly consistently in his columns—Singh was for once the butt of the barbs. The last word, ironically enough, came from Sudhir Dar, the cartoonist at *Hindustan Times*, where Singh was editor till recently. His cartoon showed Singh in quarantine writing furiously on reams of paper, with a police official peering in through the window and a colleague telling him: "Congratulations boss. You're in next week's Malice column."

■ It was an event studded with ironies. On stage was the man known not so long ago as the smuggling king and presenting him with effusive eulogies was Maharashtra's Minister of State for Excise, Abdul Aziz. Hailed as a "hard working and honest worker" Haji Mastan beamed proudly as Aziz presented him with a *Shipas Nama* for what he termed Mastan's

"yeoman services to the betterment of mankind". Whether Aziz was referring to Mastan's earlier career, when he provided quite a few job opportunities—including in the Excise Department, which was breaking down his neck—or the reformed "born again" life he now appears to lead, was not quite clear. But if the sparse



**Haji Mastan: pleasant duty**

attendance at the function was any indication, it is only the ruling party in the state that, incredibly, considers Mastan "the most popular figure in the country after Prime Minister Indira Gandhi". Move over Amitabh Bachchan and Rajiv Gandhi.

■ In Indian film making history, the relationship between the producer and the director has been remarkably cordial. Till now, that is. Recently, award-winning director Arundhati Mukherjee took the producer of her Bengali film *Deepaprakash Prem* to court on charges of chopping parts of the film

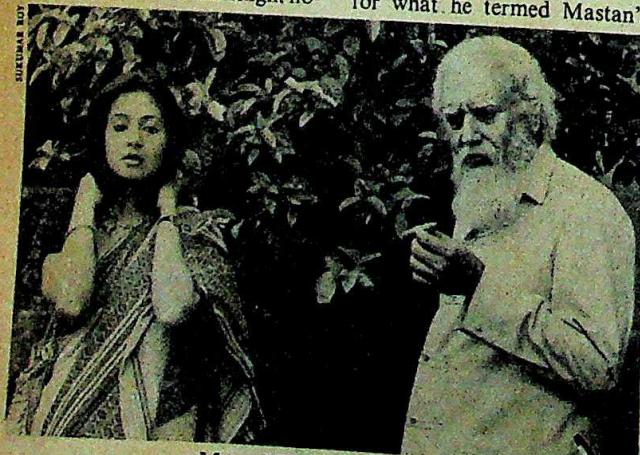
without her consent. Producer Bansal, who has made a name by producing Ray films, was not available. More so when Mukherjee managed to get an injunction to prevent the film from being leased in time for the film festival where it would be shown. Said Mukherjee: "In the old days, producers knew what films were about. But these days, just like any business, it's not about the product. Bansal, not to be outdone, retorted: "We may not be technicians but we also know that people will take and won't." Considering the lead role in the film is played by the sizzling Bengal Moon Moon Sen, that would undoubtedly make up their minds.

#### SIGN POSTS

■ Appointed: Dr Malhotra, dean of Delhi University, as director of the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT).

■ Died: Dr Yudhbir Singh, 86, veteran freedom fighter and former health minister of erstwhile Delhi state and known homoeopath, Delhi, following a haemorrhage.

■ Died: Srirangam S. Rao, 73, one of the greatest modern Telugu poets, Madras, after being admitted to hospital for hyperthyroidism.



**Moon Moon Sen and fellow actor in Deepaprakash Prem (left) and director Mukherjee: cutting remarks**





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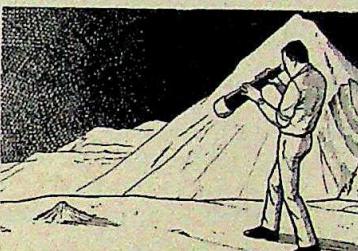
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Congress(I): Winds Of Change  
Rajiv Gandhi: The Red Carpet  
Diplomacy: The Iceberg Effect  
Gujarat: Faction Fighting  
Bihar: Cooperative Capers  
Punjab: Material Benefits  
Punjab: Under The Gun  
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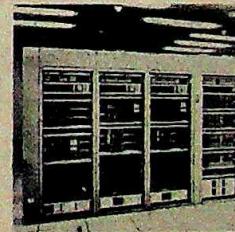
PHOTOGRAPH BY RAGHU RAI

VOL 4, JULY 31, 1983



## J & K and the Press

National press coverage of last month's J&K Assembly elections has drawn sharp criticism, most recently from the Editors Guild, for having exaggerated the scale of pre-election violence and misrepresenting basic facts. Arun Shourie, who was in J&K during the elections, analyses the coverage and finds the errors were far from inadvertent. **Special Report • Page 86**



## Congress (I)

High-voltage action describes last fortnight's dramatics, as 16 ministers, all from three Congress(I) governed states resigned or were given the sack. Among the felled victims were prominent ministers like Haryana's Lachman Singh, Rajasthan's Narendra Singh Bhati and Madhya Pradesh's Tejpal Singh. For the chief ministers it was a good opportunity to strike at dissidents. **Current Events • Page 16**

## Telephones

Last fortnight's unexpected choice of the French as the sole collaborators in the renovation and expansion of the country's telephone exchanges has not only angered other companies with more up-to-date technology who were in the running, it has also gone against the expert view. There is evidence that the decision in favour of CIT-Alcatel, was taken at the highest levels. **Business • Page 102**

## West Bengal

The acrimonious legal battle currently being waged between West Bengal's Minister for Public Works Jatin Chakravarty and pop singer Usha Uthup is a significant pointer to the growing clashes between the Marxist Government and exponents of art and culture. However, an awareness is belatedly dawning on the CPI(M) that it is time the party had a cultural policy. **The Arts • Page 134**

## STD

It has emerged as the third most dangerous affliction in India, after malaria and tuberculosis. In 1971, the national estimate of people afflicted by venereal diseases was a conservative 2 lakh and the figure soared to a shocking 7.75 lakh in 1981—an increase of almost 400 per cent. Ignorance and rigid social attitudes have contributed a great deal to this growing menace. An in-depth report. **Cover Story • Page 52**

INDIA

# TODAY

THE COMPLETE NEWSMAGAZINE

VOLUME VIII NUMBER 14  
FOR THE FORTNIGHT JULY 16-31, 1983

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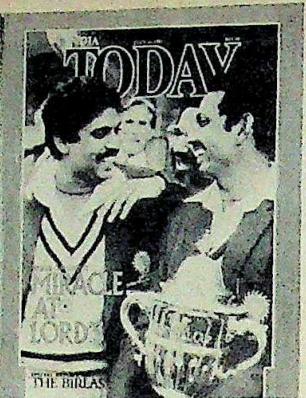
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LETTERS  
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## BOWLED OVER

Your cover story "Miracle At Lord's" (July 15) was by far the best coverage of India's victory in the Prudential World Cup. It was the first magazine on the stands with the coverage of the finals.

Allahabad

Anurag Agarwal

■ One major factor which has been overlooked in all the jubilation is the contribution of Imran Khan. Firstly for routing the Indian side during their tour, thus necessitating a change in captaincy. Secondly, providing the Indian selectors the example of an all-rounder successful captain after the failure of Ian Botham.

Madras

A.V. Arora

■ The Prudential World Cup tournament is not a miracle but an effort of persistent dedication and sincerity that worked wonders. Kapil Dev's team has given cricket fanatics a great shock and of course a new dimension that an underdog can bark well if he has mighty opponents facing him.

Calcutta

Prahlad Ghosh

■ A lot has been said in praise of our cricket team for winning the World Cup and they rightly deserve it because it was nothing less than a miracle. But have we thought of the consequences of too much praise? Let there be a word of caution also!

Siliguri

R.K. Gulati

## LITTLE BOXES

The cover story "Video Invasion" (June 30) was a welcome change after the usual politics-oriented stories. Any other photograph than that of the oft-seen Minu would have been more appealing.

Ghaziabad

E.J. Thomas

■ The article on the video boom was excellent. It covered all the pros and cons of the industry—from the numerous video clubs to the pop-eyed, film-crazy video addict.

Bangalore

Thomas Thomas

■ It is unfortunate that the use of video for educational and other useful purposes is slow in coming, though the craze has caught on in almost every town.

Bangalore

C.B. D...  
an Ameri...  
on, and that

■ Your cover story was dismal. Although notable national and international issues deservedly awaited their due share of attention, the unnecessary coverage of the story seemed incongruous.

New Delhi

Vijay B...  
ARTY PRAN...

Seymour Hersh's stunning allegation ("The Hersh Heresy", June 30) against Morarji Desai, branding him a CIA agent, is not only a slur on him but also on the country. Even Morarji Desai's severities have not dared to question his integrity.

The Government should have the allegation outright. Had such an allegation been made against any member of the Nehru family would the Government be silent?

Bahrain

Z. Fazlur Reh...

■ Hersh's allegation about Morarji Desai being a paid informer of CIA is a posterous lie, and should be challenged. It is inconceivable that such a person could be bought for any price by anyone.

One intriguing feature of the whole episode is the Indian prime minister's confessed ignorance about the truth. One can only conclude that the lady is guided more by petty personal animosity than by concern towards a nation of working people.

Madras

S.R. Ramchand...

■ The article gave a factual account of Morarji's involvement with the CIA. But tragic that information of such magnitude regarding our national security is disclosed by a foreign journalist, and even then the media makes no effort to carry out their investigations and arrive at the truth.

Harbhajan Singh

■ Reading the interview with Seymour Hersh one can only conclude that the political charge Hersh has levelled against a man of Morarji Desai's calibre cannot be easily dismissed or wished away as 'sheer malice'. Hersh's background and his inviolable status as a journalist of high standing who has also a reputation for maintaining and upholding points him out as a person, not likely to commit a falsehood. It would damn his credibility. Hersh indicates that he has ample evidence, reliable and foolproof, to justify his allegations. They are extremely odd and mysterious that Gandhi should remain silent.

T.C. M...  
June 30) ha...

It is fascinating how the Indian press in general has reacted to Hersh's allegations on Desai. Everyone thinks that Desai's an American stooge is out of the question. It is incentive enough even for a lesser. I can't figure out what Desai could have done. Did he merely pass on information or was he instrumental in blocking decision-making processes?

Jacob Dias

Vijay

**PARTY PRANKS**

Your comment "A New Beginning" (June 30) clearly picturises our Opposition's foibles, their follies and also their loopholes. Tolerance and good understanding open the doors for a more effectiveocracy. Concentration of power in one is certainly not desirable but centralisation of power among so many quarrelling will lead to instability, lawlessness and such an atmosphere of chaos.

Sanjeeb Kumar Panda

You deserve kudos for the excellent and analysis of the initiative seized by the opposition parties in trying to work out an alternative to the Congress(I). You have rightly stated that the Opposition has started moving towards a collaborative philosophy by aiming at working for unity which has been to be a mirage so far, and such an analysis on the part of the opposition parties is the truth. One means anti-national or subversive. It is guided mainly by it should motivate the Congress(I) to change itself better and to refurbish its image by taking stern action on corruption and the deteriorating law and situation. A new type of decentralisation culminating in true federalism could be such a magnanimous gesture to provide a national government and even then it could be deeply rooted in the soil.

R.N. Lakhotaia

**ATIAL MATTERS**

"General Trends" (June 30) was a very written article on the present state of in the army. The writer states that if General Sinha was a Sikh, the government would not have dared to superintend him. This observation may be valid due to the present situation in Punjab, but surely carry any weight earlier. All the cases quoted of supersessions in the cases have been of Sikhs, Lt-General Harbaksh Singh, Lt-General Jagjit Singh, Lt-General Sparrow, to name

Rajinder Singh Sodhi

**WAVES**

Undoubtedly a new trend ("Creative June 30) has already been started in

Hindi films with the release of socially-relevant and basically non-commercial films like *Bazaar* and *Akrosh*. The multi-starrer system is fading away as people have started recognising creative directors and artistes and their works. Slowly but surely, such a wave would add to the consciousness of the society.

Sonepat

Ravi Sandhu

The so-called creative surge in the industry is only a new trend in hoodwinking the public with a splash of imagination and an array of new glamour girls. The new productions cannot be called genuinely 'creative' in so far as they do not bother to depict the common man's frustrations. All forms of communication media should endeavour to highlight human concerns on a priority basis.

Kanyakumari

C.J. Rose

The reference to Albert Pinto in my film *Jaane Bhi Do Yaaro* is meant rather as a tribute than as a joke. That the sequence of Albert Pinto creates laughter is to be viewed with the total comedy structure of the film. During another night scene at Byculla Bridge where the most absurd comic scene of the film takes place, the film pays tribute to many relevant films made recently.

Bombay

Kundan Shah

**HARE KRISHNA**

Dr Karan Singh's book review "The Eternal Embrace" (June 30) was in good taste embodying the whole life of the great lord. Interestingly, the Krishna culture which is spreading fast in the western world has remained only a legend in this country. Orissa

Bhaskar Parichha

**JUDGE FOR YOURSELF**

Regarding the article "The Rape Rap" (June 30) judges do not necessarily live in ivory towers. On the contrary they are most alive and alert to the many currents of opinions, passions, creeds flowing around them. But, most judges do innately possess the judicial temperament which declines to succumb to passions of controversy. It will not expose itself to premature loyalties.

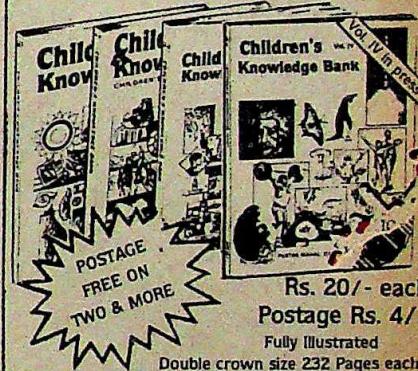
No one can lightly suggest amendments to the Law of Evidence, about a shift of the "burden of proof" in rape cases, nor offer equally facile amendments of Sections 375 and 90 of the IPC. The truth is that all this requires an expert and lengthy study. The subtle distinctions between acts of assault "against the will" of the victim and "without her consent" have stood the test. It is a fact that many true cases of rape are never reported. The climate of social obloquy that affects the pitiable victim has led to this misfortune. But it is also true that

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charges of rape are not unknown and a discerning judge will carefully scan the complex of facts and circumstances. sending an innocent Romeo to jail is surely worse than the disease.

M.K. Chubby Raj

### TING TOWER

This has reference to the article entitled "Chatterjee's Folly" (September 15, 1982) in which it has been stated that "the building is tilting to one side, reportedly because of poor underground piling." The piling was done by us. The system of piling adopted for the building was Vibro Piles, a method of origin considered one of the best in 'cast-in-situ' piles. The piles were adopted after column loading supplied to us by architect and as per drawings duly approved prior to execution of the work. Load was done on a pile selected by the architect as per YS code which confirms its acceptability. We have so far not received any written or verbal complaint from owner/architect/concerned people that the building is settling due to "poor underground piling" since the piling done in 1974. In matter of fact we always refer to "Chatterjee International Centre" as a brilliant example of superior quality of Vibro over other systems of piling adopted in soft soil like Calcutta deposit.

S.C. Bose  
Technical Director Pile Foundation Construction Co(I) Pvt Ltd

Chatterjee International was originally planned a plan for up to 13 floors and the would have been done on this basis. The company however put up 23 floors, which is why the building is tilting.

**WING HISTORY**  
The report "Marxist Message" (June 1982) being one-sided made interesting reading, for it brought out the depth to which a pro-bourgeois feudal-minded intellectual class may lower itself for the sake of buying a political gimmick. Or may be the generation of West Bengal has turned bourgeois or else how can they justify their actions regarding the inclusion of world history in the revised syllabi for undergraduate classes.

Narendra Nagar

The writer has failed to present an objective analysis of the problem. He seems to have overlooked the fact that the syllabi followed schools were framed originally by the colonialists and later modified by the which came to the helm of affairs after transfer of power. If reframing the transfer then what do you call goading the

impressionable minds with glorifications of Bapu and Chacha Nehrus as if they were the sole moving spirits behind the freedom struggle?

Kanpur

S.V.G. Menon

### A FOREIGN AFFAIR

"Talking Terms" (June 30) reveals the enthusiasm of the non-resident Indians to seek avenues for investment in India. It is unfortunate that our politicians and bureaucrats do not fully appreciate their initiative in this regard. For rapid growth, India definitely needs technology and investment. The Government, if possible, should further relax rules and conditions for the promotions of industrial participation of the non-residents.

Trivandrum

K. Balagopal

■ The views expressed at the Amsterdam conclave are typical of non-resident Indians. While assuming the role of saviours of Indian industry they have conveniently forgotten the environment in which Indian managements operate. Taxation levels leave very little for expansion, research and development.

Tamil Nadu

R. Srinivasan

■ It seems that one of the basic reasons why our political leaders do not take interest in the welfare of the non-resident Indians is that we do not have the right to vote. Secondly, the average non-resident Indians do not provide money (black or white) to Indian politicians for financing their ever increasing budget for the elections.

Kuwait

R.J. Thirwani

■ The attitude of many of these non-resident Indians is not only selfish, but it is pompous as well—even in the selection of the name "Foundation for Critical Choices for India". Further, before taking any positive action they have started demanding voting rights, tax benefits, dual nationality etc. Mr L.R.K. Paul may not be aware but the resources and talents that exist within India are several times larger.

There is of course a positive side for the non-resident affair. They have 'hard currency', a precious item which has been picked up from their western surroundings.

Bombay

Dr V.V. Chavan

### MISPLACED SUGGESTION

I strongly oppose K.S. Gangadhara's view in the letters column (June 30). It is right that there should be a certain doctor population ratio. But not in India where the Government cannot find employment for the present number of doctors.

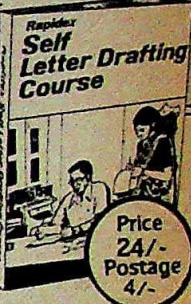
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# Good Business And Bad

THE MAKING of business decisions involving vast sums of government money remains, three and a half decades after Independence, a dark, mysterious process crying out to see the light of day. The increasing size and complexity of government, the growing sophistication of the economy and the mounting dictates of security obviously complicate decision making. Competing points of view and group interests intervene to bedevil the decision maker's task. This is a well recognised characteristic of governmental decision making in the world's leading democracies. But most others are rich and may be able to afford wasteful luxury. India cannot. Decisions by the Government in the purchase of equipment and technology, civil and military, involve huge sums of money. This cannot and should not remain a vast *terra incognita*. Government decisions of this kind must not only be demonstrably business-like, they must also be seen to be rational, efficient, above board and not least on merit.

Of late, quite the opposite has been happening with distressing frequency. Last fortnight's decision to award a large contract for a second factory to manufacture telephone exchange equipment to the same French company which was virtually handed the contract for the first such factory may well turn out to be the right one. But the manner in which it was taken, as a story in this issue shows, hardly inspires that confidence. The Government appeared to behave as if its right hand didn't know what its left was doing; worse still, it was clear that expert views had been ignored; and, to cap it all, the decision had been unexpectedly handed down from above precisely at the moment when a two-year-long selection process was reaching a climax.

Had this been an isolated incident it could be faulted much less. Governments have a right to take decisions and they may have larger public interests in mind that compel them in certain directions. But then democratic governments are accountable through Parliament to the people who elect them to office, and their actions cannot be left with disturbing question marks hanging over them. And shadows of the kind that fall across the telephone exchange decision are far from unique.

Much the same thing happened shortly after the Congress(I) returned to power in 1980. Almost three years of negotiation had resulted in the award just a few weeks earlier of two giant gas-based fertiliser plants to the British subsidiary of an American leader in the field. Several reviews later, the experts recommended the American should not be dropped entirely but that is precisely what the Cabinet did: it split the contract between two contenders who had earlier been rejected. It was not the decision so much as the manner in which it was taken that provoked widespread criticism.

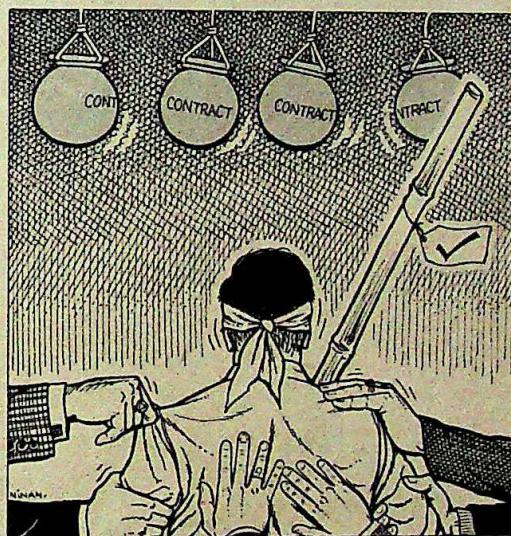
The list of questionable decisions is unending. Ten years have gone by and four committees have reported on the subject, but the Government appears to live permanently on the brink of making up its mind on which light commercial aircraft to buy. A decision to make or buy outright 120 Jaguar deep penetration strike aircraft taken by the Janata government was curtailed by the successor Congress(I) Government to 40, and the gap in numbers sought to be made up with advanced Soviet MiGs and French Mirage aircraft. One result of this mysterious turn-about: a veritable menagerie of aircraft types to complicate the air force's maintenance and fighting demands. Yet other decisions seem to be hasty and ill-conceived: two years ago a British company won the contract for a giant steel mill at Visakhapat-

nam without a feasibility report being prepared. The company won the contract after slashing its bid by some hundreds of crores, and later upped the price—so that the project had to be deferred indefinitely.

Mistakes can undoubtedly be made, but when there is so much at stake, and so many inimicable forces at work, no room can be left for doubt. After decades of an autocratic policy, with an emphasis on government to government economic and defence dealings, India is now on a foreign buying spree. And these purchases are being made at precisely the time when the West is trying to emerge from an industrial recession. The result is a scramble for the Indian market.

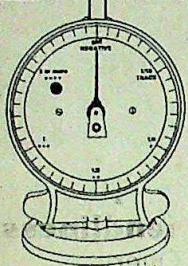
In the last year or two, powerful forces have come to operate in the Indian capital. Private companies are often backed by governments who step in with competing offers of soft loans. The manner in which the case for the technologies and goods of different countries is projected to the Indian public suggests a well organised and resourceful public relations effort. And, there are the lobbyists who have pipelines not only to senior bureaucrats but to ministers, and members of Parliament. The odour of kickbacks and slush funds has come to permeate the corridors of power where the deals are sealed.

All this demands more streamlined business decisions and quicker decisions. For two years the Government has been sitting on offers for super-thermal power stations, without a decision coming any closer. At root is the question of credibility. At one level, international credibility: the Indian Government is known for always paying its debts but has yet to establish credibility as an impartial business partner. At a more important level, however, is the question of credibility at home where its decision making is being seen at best as irrational, at worst as being motivated. As the old adage goes, justice must be seen to be done. Decisions which involve hundreds of crores of rupees must similarly be seen to be right.



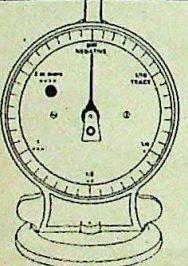
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### VOICES

Edited by Arya Samaj Foundation Chennai and eGangotri

► Bhindranwale thrives on extremist postures, but is not extremist. He is a hardliner with a limited vision atop a swelling wave. He wants to be the leader of the movement but may end up its prisoner....

- Rajinder Puri in The Sunday Observer

► (The Opposition chief ministers' meetings) are well-intentioned, but a bit like fighting operations, they are not going to provide any solutions.

- Chandra Shekhar at a press conference in New Delhi

► Sharad (Pawar) is a dangerous man. The most dangerous... for him he alone matters. And he is a great manipulator.

- Nasikrao Tirkude in Outlook

► Crises have become the political diet of Mrs Gandhi. She loves them, (and) invites them....

- Pran Chopra in Sunday Express

► After Chandra Shekhar's successful padayatra, the threat (to Mrs Gandhi) is more from foreign hands but from domestic feet.

- D.E. Nizamuddin in Sunday Observer

► I do not look at politics as a farce, and neither the politicians as caricatures. But they are somewhat frightening. One needs to be dreadfully serious about them there.

- Vijay Tendulkar in Outlook

► Fifteen hours of sitting strapped in an (aeroplane) chair can give the healthiest person a pain in his arse—not a metaphorical pain but a real hemorrhoidal itch in his fundament.

- Khushwant Singh in The Hindustan Times

► Amitabh (Bachchan) *to ek kathputli hai* (is a puppet). Someone writes the story, the other directs, writes the dialogues, songs, someone else sings. But my poetry is my own. I am not a puppet.

- Harivansh Rai Bachchan in Hindustan Times Sunday Magazine

► I am 100 per cent sure that he (Sai Baba) is a trickster... I have met people with genuine supernormal powers but Sai Baba is definitely not one of them.

- P.C. Sorear in Gentleman's Quarterly

► If Dimple (Kapadia) reads philosophy or Gibran, then I'm writing a thesis on the Bible. I don't say she is dumb, but she is certainly not (a) super intellectual.

- Randhir Kapoor in Sunday Observer

► We are a sex-starved nation.... Our audience loves titillation, but they are wrapped up in religion, patriotism etc. If you offer them sex, in the bold stark way, they won't digest it.

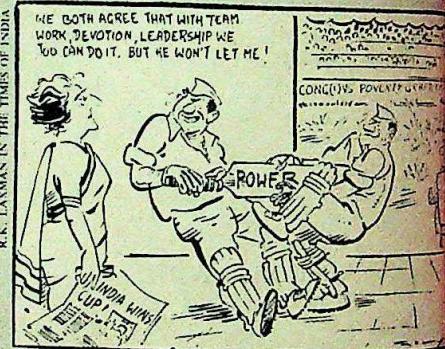
- Naseeruddin Shah in Cineplex

► Some marriages are made in heaven, and among them surely is the marriage of Bhajan Lal to the chief minister's chair... (he) is in the category of super manipulators....

- Editorial comment in The Telegraph

► Gandhi is a propaganda film.... It is being used for inter-superpower ideological politics and India has become a party to it without realising it.

- M.S. Sathyu in Bombay Times



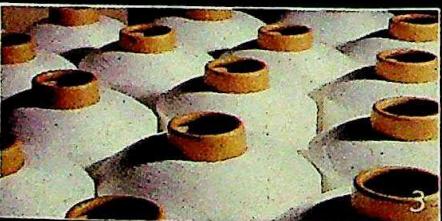
FROM POLYESTER  
CHIPS' TO YARN  
O FABRICS TO  
ARMENTS:

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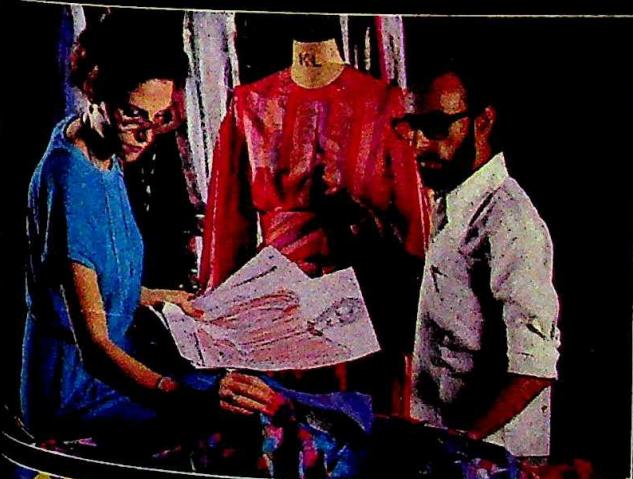
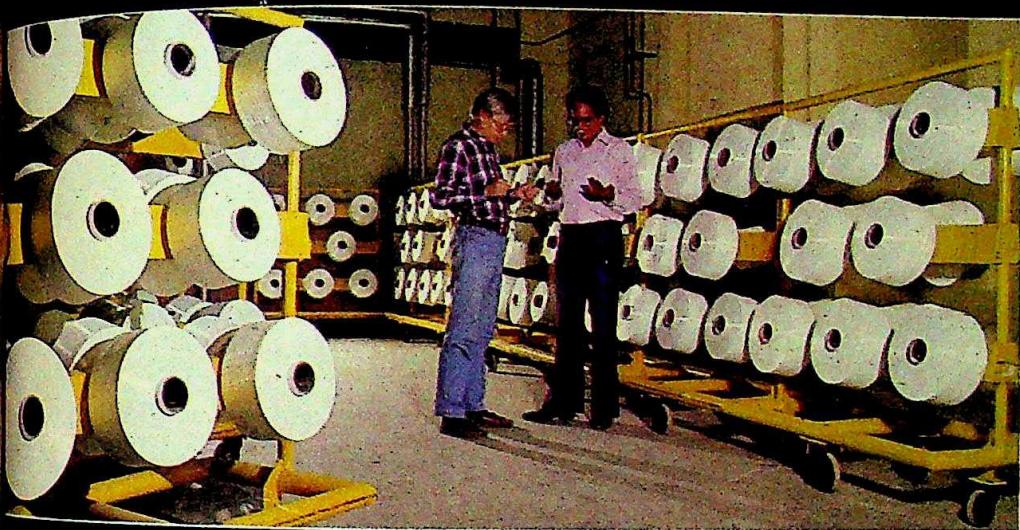
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4. Quality control at Orkay Polyester.
5. At Saki Naka in Bombay, our textile mill weaves a magic spell. Shown here is the screen printing process.
6. At the same plant, another 'first' in India: transfer printing.
7. A German technician with his Indian counterpart at Orkay Polyester.
8. At our third plant in Marol, Bombay, we twist, crimp, texturise and dye polyester yarn. And we manufacture here high fashion readymade garments for export.
9. Texturised yarn being packed before despatch.

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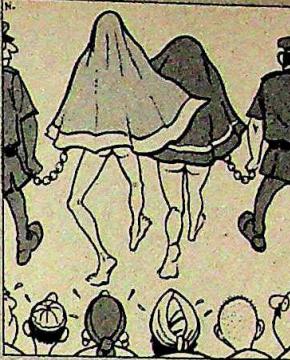
TODAY, JULY 3

## SIDE FROLICS

After the recent tense elections in Jammu & Kashmir, the people were sorely in need of comic relief. Comic relief they got, but not quite the way they had expected. Last fortnight, Srinagar citizens and tourists sunning themselves along the Dal Lake stopped and stared when they saw a foreign couple

saundering about without anything on. The police flung a couple of bedspreads on them and flung them into jail.

In jail, however, the couple, later identified as Lebeda, female, from Austria and Schlipper, male, from West Germany—their names were discovered from documents in their bags at a hotel—made life almost unbearable for the warden, singing and dancing



and breaking window panes.

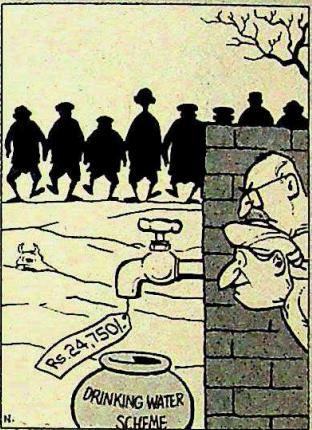
In court, Lebeda and Schlipper drove the magistrate to distraction with their yodelling. One blessing was that the two were dressed but the magistrate sentenced them to five days' imprisonment—and released them immediately, as they had already spent five days in custody. The environs of the Dal Lake are even more crowded than usual.

## THE PRICE OF POWER

Hospitality is all right, Rs 24,750 worth is ridiculous. Eight former councillors of the Hiriyur municipality in Karnataka have just come to that conclusion. Last year, the then chief minister R. Gundu Rao had decided, in his gracious way, to come to Hiriyur to lay the foundation-stone of a Rs 80-lakh drinking water project. Although the municipality was authorised to spend only Rs 250 on such a func-

tion, eight councillors laid out Rs 25,000 for the event.

Came the great day, came Gundu, came the garlands and the speeches and the inauguration and when the bills were totted up at the end of the day it was found that the whole thing had cost Rs 24,750. Came the change of government and a note from the deputy commissioner asking why Rs 24,750 had been spent. The councillors replied that this had been done to uphold the "prestige" of



Hiriyur municipality. The deputy commissioner was not impressed and came a notice to the tehsildar asking him to recover Rs 3,093 from each councillor.

All donations to the Stricken Councillors Relief Fund should be addressed to any one of the following in Hiriyur: B. Kenchappa, K. Chennappa, H.K. Bheemaiah, Abdul T. Jaleel, Perumalappa, K.H.N. Asihamaiah, H.D. Ramanayak and Smt. Papamma.

## PASSING FANCY

Naresh Sharma of Cheher village in Kota district, Rajasthan, is a young man of great perseverance. Only young men of great perseverance can give an examination 11 times, after failing to pass 0 times.

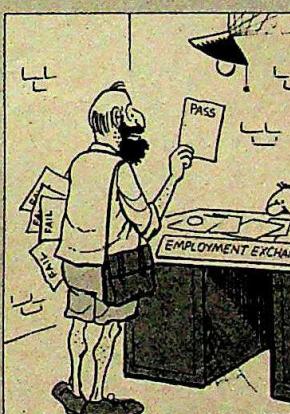
But to start at the beginning, more than a decade ago, Sharma told the elders of his village that he wanted a job. They told him kindly that

he had no chance of getting a job until he acquired some kind of qualification and the first rung on the ladder of education was obviously matriculation. So Sharma set off on his odyssey.

The road was long and hard, tons of midnight oil met their fate; Sharma's little hut reverberated constantly to the squeaking of slate pencils, but he finally passed the Rajasthan Secondary School Certificate Examination in his ele-

venth attempt, and went off to get a "gormint" job.

Horrors! Sharma was told, very gently, by the concerned authority, who was trying to see if that massive ledger there could be used as a shield if Sharma got violent, that he was age-barred for government employment. A stunned matriculate went back to the village elders and wept. Somewhere in the Thar desert, a good man is breaking up.



## LIPSTICK

Everybody knows that representatives of the people are supposed to look after the welfare of the folks back home, but that is no reason to be hounding them. Look what happened to a man in Radhanagar, near Madras. Radhanagar, like a lot of towns in the state, has been going without water for a long time. So it was with considerable fanfare that Abdul

Razack, legislator of the ruling All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, announced that he would be arriving there to inaugurate a water supply scheme. He brought an impressive number of officials, newsmen, photographers and TV cameramen in tow and was just going to make a speech when one of his constituents spoiled things for him.

The constituent scolded Razack: "There is no water

here and you are coming with TV and photographers." Razack whirled on the man and delivered a round-house slap which caused the constituent to spin in his tracks. Officials grabbed the angry MLA and a woman stopped the victim spinning and took him away. The incident should be one more warning that in a free and functioning democracy, the ruled can push the rulers only so far.

Compiled by JAGANNATH DUBASHI

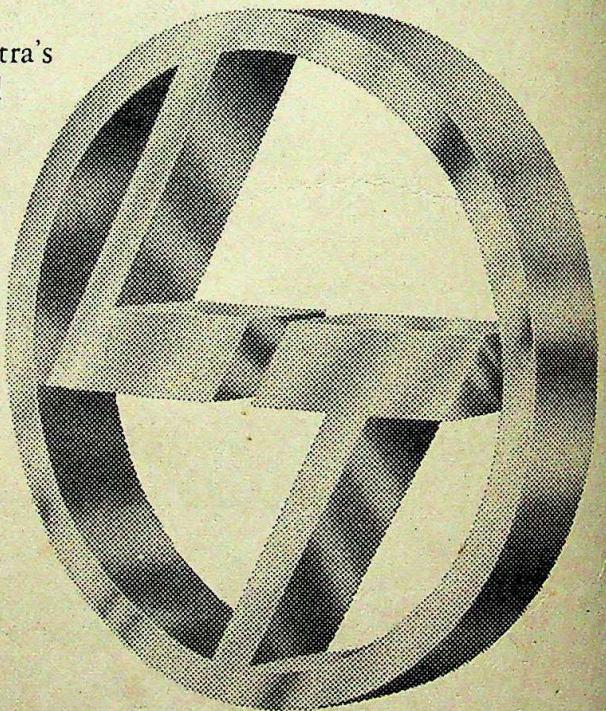


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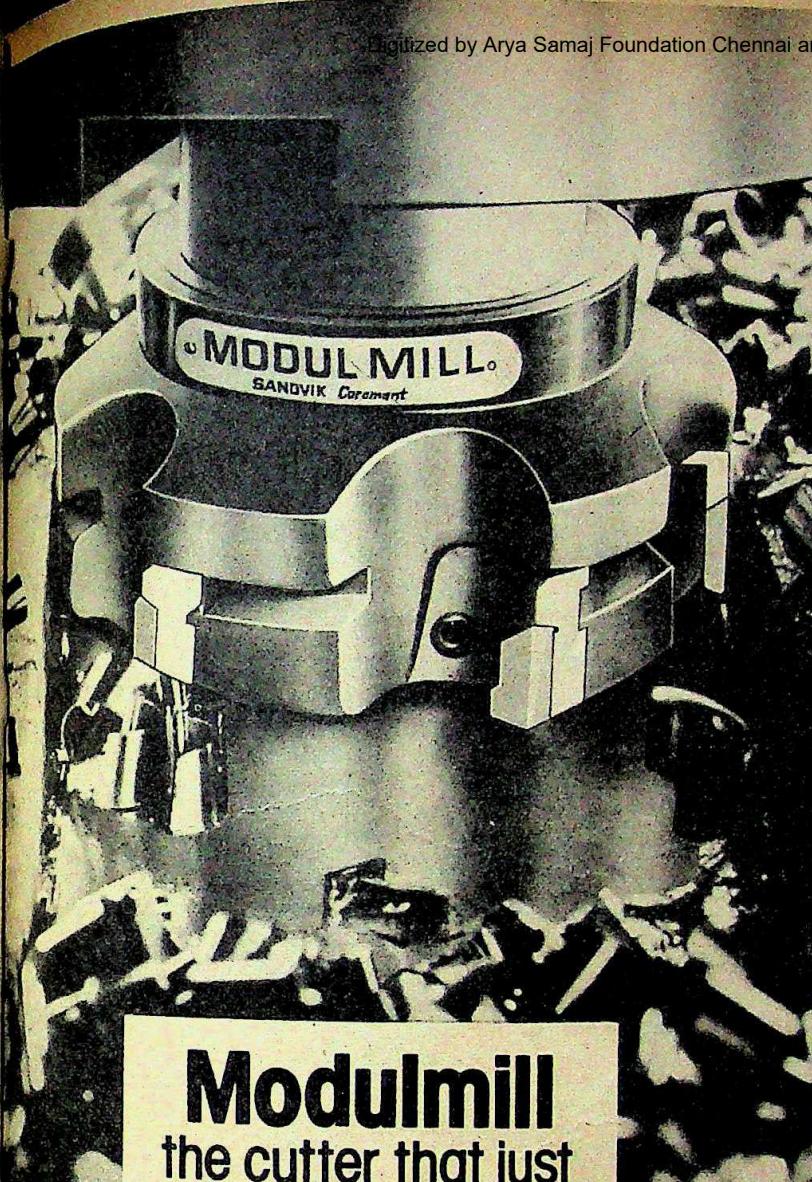
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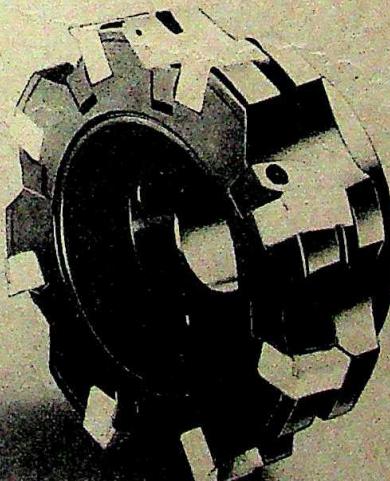
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## CONGRESS (I)

# Winds Of Change

**I**T WAS a fortnight of what the billboards would describe as "action-packed drama". In three states, all governed by the Congress(I), 16 ministers stepped out of office, either resigning themselves or being forced to leave. In addition, two state Congress(I) chiefs were asked to go. As if that were not enough, a seemingly disinterested Mrs Gandhi, recovering from jet lag following a 12-day five-nation trip, told a meeting of the Congress(I) Parliamentary Board (CPB) that she was tired of being constantly on the go, hawking her fabled (and overused) charisma to the farthest corners of the country, and others had better share in the burden.

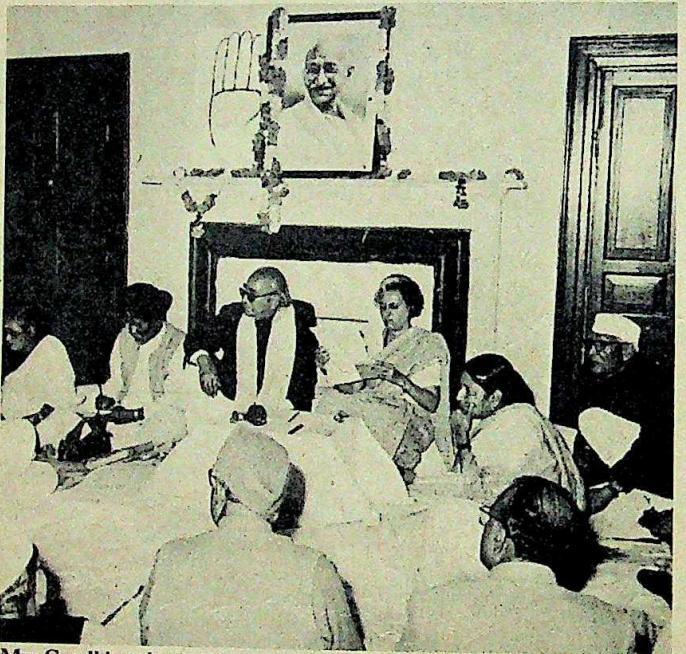
The actions of the party high command, however, were far from being tinged with its supreme leader's avowed sense of resignation. And the cue came from Mrs Gandhi herself when she told the CPB that the hands of the chief ministers should be strengthened. In the party's familiar short-hand, it means letting the chief ministers carry out their plans of shifting people according to their whims.

Even before the CPB met, Bhajan Lal, the crafty chief minister of Haryana, had been the first to strike. With his sharp antenna for fluctuating moods at 1, Safdarjung Road, Lal hurriedly dismissed from the Cabinet two of his powerful colleagues: Lachman Singh and Phool Chand (INDIA TODAY, July 15). Between themselves, Singh and Chand represented the vocal dissident group in the state's Congress(I) politics, blessed by Bansi Lal, the influential Jat leader who has for long cast his shadow on the party in Haryana.

**Strong Rebellion:** The dissidents hit back with surprising speed and grit. Within days, six other dissident ministers handed in their resignations. They are: Harpal Singh, Surender Singh (Bansi Lal's son), Govindan Das Chauhan, Sharda Rani, A.C. Chowdhary, and Amar Singh Dhanak. The solidarity of the eight rebels was reportedly forged at Delhi's Bangla Sahib Gurdwara where they had pledged to sink or swim together.

The action then shifted to neighbouring Rajasthan where Shiv Charan Mathur, the deceptively mild chief minister, acted with

unfamiliar toughness to get rid of four of his colleagues. The men to be thrown out by Mathur were: Hanuman Prabhakar, the number two man in the earlier Cabinet of Jagannath Pahadia, Gobind Anelia, Surendra Vyas, and Narendra Singh Bhati, arch-rebel and supposedly a friend of Rajiv Gandhi. Vyas's dismissal came when he was preparing to leave for New Delhi to attend an official



Mrs Gandhi at the working committee session: delegating responsibility

meeting. When Bhati showed his temper and refused to resign as advised by the chief minister, he was sacked without much fuss.

The winds of change were blowing in Madhya Pradesh too. Arjun Singh, the state's astute chief minister, who had for some months been itching to order the third reshuffle in three years of his reign, suddenly found the lights changing. The first to go were Tajlal Tembhre and Bhavani Lal Verma, followed by the three parliamentary secretaries, Mangal Singh Jadav, Ratnesh Saloman and Rajendra Mishra, all holding the rank of minister of state.

**Reshuffle:** Singh alone was allowed by the high command to promote and hire some people. While shaking down the bad apples, he could still humour many others, promoting three and inducting six more in his council of ministers. Mouthing clichés, and enjoying his clout, said a beaming Singh: "This time I wanted to form a cohesive team which could improve the image of the party as well

as the Government." Singh no doubt some clout to write home about. Following the reshuffle, he will personally handle portfolios of general administration, publicity and culture, aviation, energy, mada Valley Development, planning, economic affairs, public undertaking 20-point programme implementation science and technology.

Mathur and Bhajan Lal were less fortunate than Singh as the high command, after allowing them to axe the tested ones, withheld at the last moment

permission to expand their nets. In the elaborate system in which the Congress operates, it can get suicide chief minister to chop some ministers without taking a bunch on board. The thing happened in the case of the Mathur-Lal duo which tested antagonism without able to win friends.

The stubbornness in rank of the Haryana dissident was put on blatant display. high command first thought could mellow them down appealing to Bansi Lal himself. But Bansi Lal had already thrown his lot with the rebels, and had politely rejected a request from Kamalapathi, the Congress(I) vice-president, to quieten theious ministers.

**Backlash:** Far from cowed down, the Haryana dissidents were actually harder in their stand. "We have shown

the people of Haryana that we do not support an unscrupulous chief minister. Our moral victory is entirely ours," said H. Singh, who was the PCC(I) president last year. At Bhiwani, Bansi Lal's citadel, surrender was besieged by mobs of supporters congratulating him for resigning from ministry. Said he: "The longer we remain with Bhajan Lal, the more we would be alienated from the people."

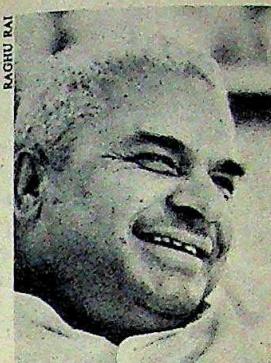
Equally vehement was the backlash against Mathur's peremptory action. Prabhakar, assuming the role of the chief spokesman of the dissidents, and describing Mathur as a "feudal chieftain", put forward their case when he said: "There is no spirit in the Rajasthan Cabinet. The chief minister orders officials without even consulting with the relevant ministers. He treats ministers as orderlies or peons." The dissidents had even organised a rally at the PCC(I) office in Jaipur of party workers from Bikaner, Mathur's home district, who gave a

about. Following his accusation of "insulting loyal  
businessmen".  
However, Mathur's  
days began much earlier  
when he clipped the  
wings of Bhati by di-  
smissing him of the presti-  
gious portfolio of Rajas-  
than Canal. Interestingly,  
Mathur had never aligned  
himself openly with the  
opposition, but Mathur was  
aligned with him because  
he had recommended pun-  
itive action against some  
of the engineers of the canal project. Though  
Mathur denies it, his opponents allege that he was shielding the engineers because many of them belonged to his own caste—the Brahmins.

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NFACT, Mathur has never been able to  
keep his flock together. His strained rela-  
tions with Nawal Kishore Sharma, the  
president, are well-known. Recently,  
Sharma tendered his resignation ac-  
cusing responsibility for his party's defeat in  
election, Mathur could barely conceal  
it and was about to get another person  
nominated as the PCC(I) chief when the high  
command promptly stalled his hand.  
Now that Mathur has already made the  
move in a game of escalating bitter-  
ness he will find Sharma arrayed wholly on  
one side of his opponents. And Mathur's  
case is not unique. Some time back, the  
Chief Minister Janaki Ballabh Patnaik  
and the Bihar Chief Minister Jagannath were  
asked to drop many of their oppo-  
nents. Jagannath sacked as many as 11  
of his ministers in February, but he has been  
waiting till now for an assenting nod by  
the high command in order to expand  
his Cabinet. Meanwhile, the dissidents  
have got enough time to regroup them-  
selves and are now clamouring for  
Jagannath's ouster.

BHAWAN SINGH

Despite the Mathur-Lal-Singh trio putting up a brave front now, the Congress chief ministers are indeed gripped by a paralysis of spirit. In Himachal Pradesh, for instance, Veerbhadr Singh, the recently-appointed chief minister, has not been allowed to weed out Cabinet some of the most sullied in the state's politics. As a result, some guilt has begun to recoil on Singh. In Bihar, the chief minister, Sripat Mishra, the non-descript even though he has completed one year in office without adding or dropping a single member of the Cabinet. In Maharashtra, Vasant Dada Patil, the chief minister who is regarded as the most spirited of the lot, could push out a single detractor of his.



**Chief Ministers Bhajan Lal, Shiv Charan Mathur and Arjun Singh: getting tough**



A black and white photograph of Hari Om Gulati, a middle-aged man with dark hair and glasses, wearing a turtleneck sweater. He is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera.

**Cross Purposes:** The fact about dissidence in the Congress(I) is now all too clear despite the party leaders trying to wish it away. The state Government-run bhavans in New Delhi are chock-full of Congress(I) MLA's every month carrying petitions against their chief ministers, addressed either to Rajiv or to Mrs Gandhi herself. Recently there were 20 MLA's and eight ministers staying at Haryana Bhavan on the capital's Copernicus Marg, all assembled to complain to "Madam" against Bhajan Lal. In four of the 10 major Congress(I)-run states—Maharashtra, Assam, Kerala and Rajasthan—the PCC(I) presidents and the chief ministers are at cross purposes with each other.

The party leadership does not tire of professing its intention to quell infighting. But, when it comes to charting out a course of action, it actually gives commands that perpetuate infighting instead of curbing it. And, in most cases, the inspiration for dissension as well as disciplining the party comes



Srinat Mishra and Veerbhadr Singh: paralysed

from the same source—the high command. In Rajasthan as well as Haryana, the dissident leaders had free access to the high command while they were building up their campaigns against the chief ministers. Confessed a Rajasthan minister, recently expelled: "Till the day that Mathur got the clearance to remove us, we were under the impression that we'd win. Now, the table has turned."

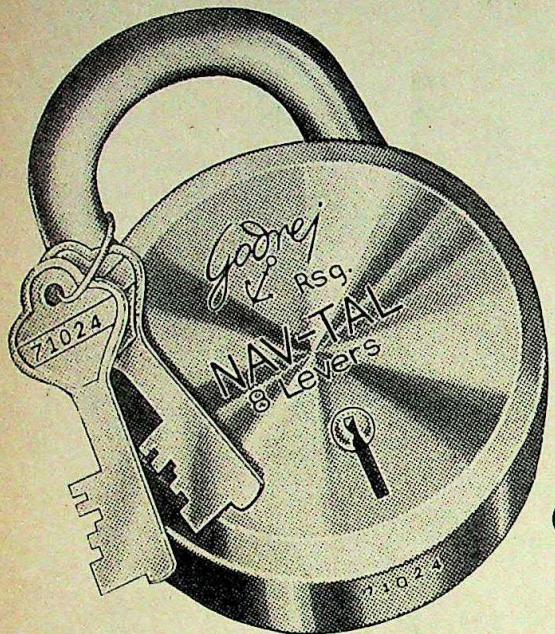
Mrs Gandhi may be tired of touring, as she said at the CPB meeting, but she is certainly not tired of 'managing' dissidence in her old, familiar style, which is one of stoking its fire periodically so that it does not finally die. She has her own threat perception in which the concept of a strong chief minister does not fit. Said H.N. Bahuguna, chairman of the Democratic Socialist Party and one of the keenest In-  
thers among the opposition leaders: Gandhi briefly experimented with chief ministers in 1980 but got her burnt in the wake of the Antulay affair now wants her chief ministers to be perpetually reaching for the panic button.

**Sharp Strategy:** Mrs Gandhi's attitude to her chief ministers is in fact conditioned by her own analysis of the 1985 election scenario where she expects—just as everyone else in the game of politics—new groupings to emerge cutting across the existing party lines. It does not really suit her purpose to allow the centre of gravity of the Congress(I) politics to shift from New Delhi to the state capitals. At least, it does not agree with her past experience when a whole lot of the 'strong' chief ministers—Siddhartha Shankar Ray of West Bengal, Vasantrao Dada Patil of Maharashtra, Devraj Urs of Karnataka, and, earlier, Bahuguna in Uttar Pradesh—had left her when the crunch came.

Instead of starting over with a brand new team, rid of dissidence and petty internal squabbles, she would field the existing team into the electoral arena next year. Efforts in this direction are already on. From July 24, a two-day camp of 400 PCC(I) office-bearers will take place in New Delhi. This will be followed by district level camps over the next two months in which 2,000 middle-level Congress(I) leaders will undergo brainstorming training sessions. Top economists, tax experts, social scientists, advocates and Central ministers have been drafted for addressing them.

"We have no dissidents. It is a creation of the newspapers," piped in Rajendra Kumari Bajpai, a general secretary of the All India Congress Committee(I). But, in her exuberance, she probably forgot to mention that her party's unique selling point for the general elections, looming only 17 months away, is a strong high command, which presupposes weakened commands lower down.

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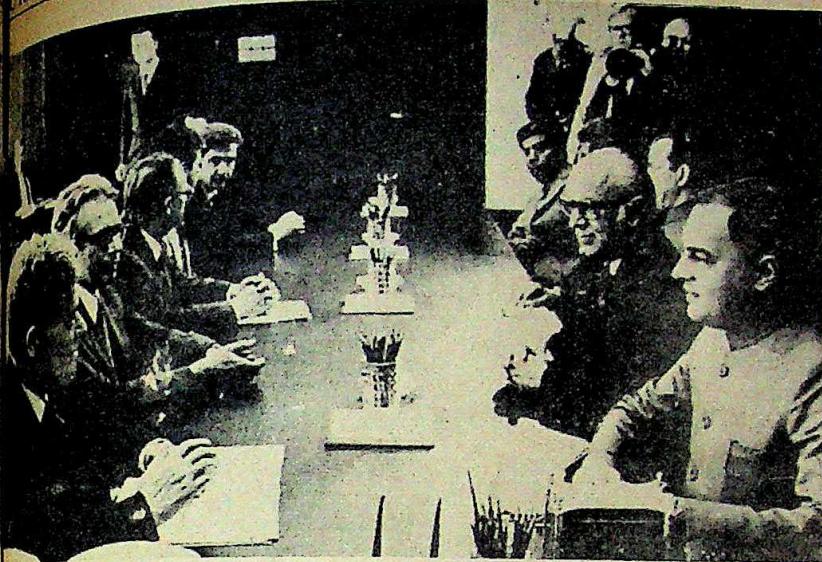
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Rajiv with Russian parliamentarians: attaching importance to the visit

W GANDHI

## The Red Carpet

THE LIST of engagements read like a schedule for a visiting head of government or a senior minister at the last. There was the high level airport meet, meetings with the foreign minister (foreign trade minister, not to mention select locations and talks with numerals). In rolling out the red carpet for Gandhi, member of Parliament and the Congress(I)'s five general secretaries, the Soviet Union was obviously going its way to convey a message. As one official told INDIA TODAY: "Rajiv Gandhi's visit shows the importance the party and state leaders attach to him." The attitude was reminiscent of the initiatives to build bridges with Rashtra Sanjay Gandhi when he was at the height of his influence during the Emergency. Sanjay accompanied his mother on an all-expense-paid visit in 1976 but had insisted that his name should be a separate one. He was no friend of the Soviets and in fact far from happy with remarks attributed to him which said that he is reported to have met with some Uzbek leaders at a recent meeting. Yet, none of this deterred the Soviets from trying to make their guest feel at home.

**Modest Stance:** Rajiv had also raised his mother in the past in complete contrast with Sanjay, who maintained a low profile. That had also marked his current programme though his programme was designed to impress. Rajiv

landed at Moscow's Sheremetyevo Airport where he was ceremonially received by Alexei Chytikov, chairman of the Soviet Lower House of Parliament. However, as his visit coincided with that of West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, he received very little coverage in Moscow press in the first days of his visit.

On his return from Voronez, however, on July 7, he met the powerful Defence Minister Marshal Dmitri Ustinov and the Soviet First Vice-President V. Kuznetsov. Next day he was received by Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko. It was Rajiv's first major exposure to the high drama of statecraft. For the top Soviet leaders, on the other hand, it was an opportunity to study and assess the young politician at close quarters, and without the overshadowing presence of his mother.

As one Kremlin official put it: "Rajiv



Rajiv with Gromyko: a first major exposure

Gandhi's visit shows the high level of relationship existing between India and the USSR. Both India and the Soviet Union are striving to preserve them and develop them." In a pointed allusion to the rising political star of the young MP from Amethi, he added: "Even if governments change."

**Strategic Visits:** Rajiv had a busy schedule during his visit to Voronez. He was shown around an aircraft factory there and later stopped off at a major atomic power plant. India is working on an agreement with the USSR for the installation of two 44 mw nuclear plants in the country on this model. Obviously one of the considerations for selecting this town for Rajiv's itinerary was the possibility of promoting the agreement.

While Rajiv was being feted by the state officials, his wife Sonia, who had accompanied him as a state guest, visited the historic city of Leningrad along with their children. Though she remained out of the public eye, she kept herself busy—a number of cultural programmes were arranged for her.

It is difficult to measure the Soviet attitude, as—especially under the new regime—there is a noticeable tendency to underplay everything. However, judging by the cautiously worded opinions expressed in the officially controlled Soviet media, the major problem the Soviets see is the threat to India's unity posed by the various fissiparous movements. As Gromyko told Rajiv, the USSR would like to see India as a united, strong and prosperous power.

**High Priority:** It was indicative of the great importance the Soviet leaders attach to cultivating Rajiv that they gave him so much importance in terms of meetings with the higher echelons of the Soviet hierarchy despite the fact that his visit coincided with that of the West German chancellor. Given the global ramifications of Kohl's discussions with the Soviet leaders regarding, among other things, the deployment of Pershing and Cruise missiles in Europe, it was only natural that Rajiv's presence went largely unnoticed in the first few days of his visit.

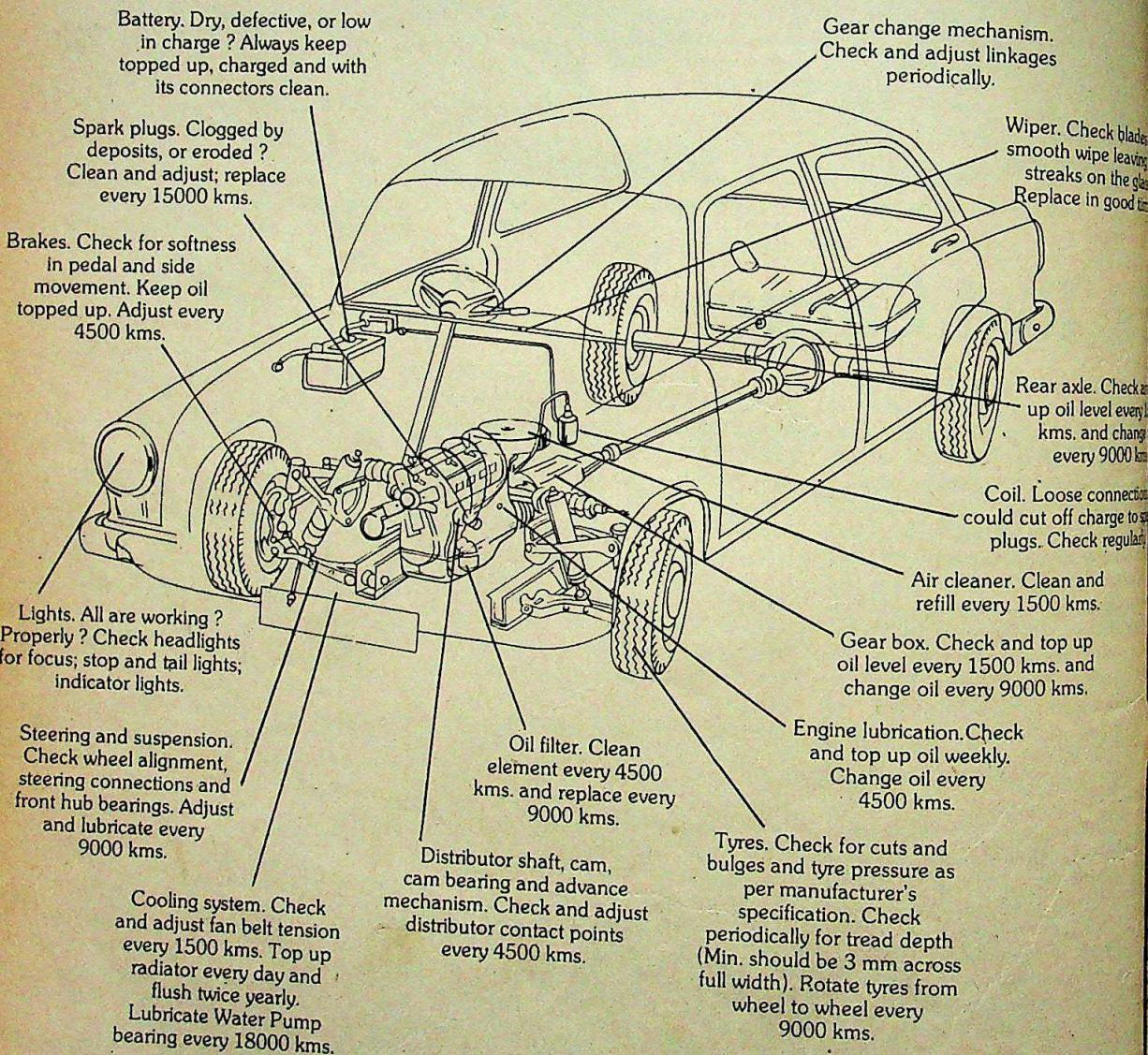
But despite their pre-occupation with Kohl, the Soviet authorities made a relatively big affair of Rajiv's visit. As one official apologetically said: "It was difficult for Soviet leaders to make necessary adjustments to pay adequate attention to Rajiv Gandhi, but they somehow managed to find time and the visiting Congress leader met some of our top leaders."

Significantly, they had given similar importance to Sanjay—though he was, on a personal level, much less popular with them. The Soviets evidently lay great store by goodwill investments in promising futures.

—SURENDRA V. KUMAR in Moscow

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# DIPLOMACY

# The Iceberg Effect

**R**EATIONS between the two largest democracies—India and the US—have started to resemble one of those amateurishly constructed boy scout campsites which flare up briefly every time a stick is stuck into them before returning to a dull, smoky glow. US Secretary of State George Shultz's whistle-stop in New Delhi last fortnight was just that: a stick-poking exercise that revived the flame of Indo-US relations briefly before being doused in cold reality.

Admittedly, Shultz's visit was unfortunately timed. US envoy in New Delhi, Harry Barnes, was under hostile fire for controversial and ill-advised remarks in which he had equated the Khalistan issue to the demand for self-determination of Puerto Rico. Additionally, Barnes's gaffe came close on the heels of the Indian Government's protest to the US for supporting Khalistan protagonist Jagtar Singh Chauhan a visa. Irritants: And, Indian Defence Minister R. Venkataraman had just returned from a high-level visit to Moscow where, according to sources, an arms deal worth an estimated \$1 billion had just been signed. Add to the irritants, on the eve of the Shultz visit came reports, obviously unfounded, that Pakistan had detonated an underground nuclear explosion.

India was preparing to follow suit with regard to Tarapur Atomic Plant from a third country (Italy or West Germany), in this it had been decided well in advance. A State Department spokesman had hinted much during a press briefing in Washington a week before Shultz actually arrived. But the fact that the question of India's reprocessing the spent fuel was left unrefined clearly meant that the spare parts were more in the nature of a conciliatory gesture. As one foreign ministry source put it, Shultz's real motive was to call off the ASEAN foreign ministers' conference in Bangkok and use the occasion to

"renew the dialogue" with India and Pakistan, started during Mrs Gandhi's and President Zia's visits to Washington last year. His main engagement was to chair a session of the Indo-US Joint Commission along with External Affairs Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao.

**Commendable Effort:** It must be said to his credit that Shultz made a valiant effort to bestow his visit with more importance than it eventually received. Sources present at the

Shultz is the highest US official to visit India since Jimmy Carter's lukewarm trip in 1978 and he was obviously determined to label it a success. That much at least, was evident by his statement that the US would be willing to sell weaponry to India. In fact, the question was discussed but bogged down over the disagreement in the terms. However, the fact that the offer was made marks a radical change in the US position which has in the past objected to India buying weaponry that contains an element of US technology from a third country.

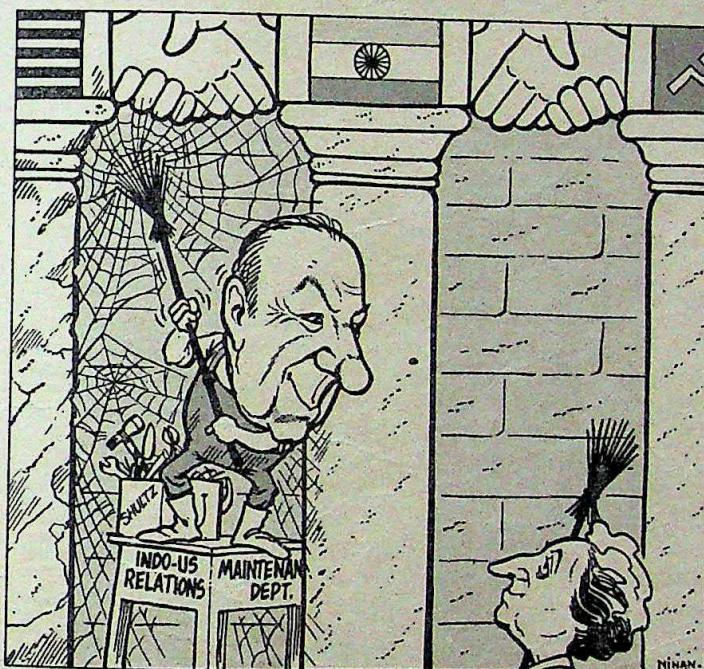
**Crucial Questions:** At the end of the visit, one foreign ministry official described Indo-US relations as being subject to what he called the "iceberg effect". In other words, like icebergs, they took a long time to reach their destination and when they did, very little substance was visible on the surface. But it could also denote the temperature on both sides over two questions that form the crux of the relationship—India's relations with the Soviet Union and the US's wooing of Pakistan through arms sales. Both sides display considerable intransigence over the issues.

The US views India's friendship with the Soviets in much the same manner that India reacts to Washington's closeness to Islamabad, though both sides realise that there is an inevitability which cannot be diverted. If push comes to shove, there is no question which way the US would jump if it were a choice between Islamabad and

New Delhi. With six F-16s malevolently poised in Pakistani hangers out of the 40 the US has contracted to supply Pakistan and with Zia wanting 60 more, it is hardly surprising that Venkataraman went scurrying off to Moscow.

But if arms sales are the basis for disagreement between India and the US, there is really no choice as far as New Delhi is concerned. Defence Ministry officials have made it abundantly clear that what they want in terms of weaponry must be subject to certain conditions. It must be the latest technology available and the agreement must contain transfer of technology agreements and indigenous manufacture in India.

**Obvious Preference:** The Soviets possess technology that is hardly inferior to anything else available; they are perfectly willing to meet India's conditions and their price tags are considerably lower with the added incentive of rupee payments. The US, on the other hand, insists that arms sales are subject



talks confirmed that Shultz won considerable friends by his frankness and willingness to discuss issues that have bedevilled relations between the two countries in recent years. "If more people on both sides would concentrate on the areas of disagreement rather than those on which we are of one mind, it might change the face of Indo-US relations," remarked the source.

Shultz and Mrs Gandhi's scheduled 45-minute meeting stretched out into two meetings spread over two hours and obviously a basic rapport had been reached. Shultz, the former vice-president of the Bechtel Corporation, was on familiar ground when he met leading industrialists and businessmen to discuss ways to increase the scope of trade and commerce between the two countries and though the US resistance to increased aid for India from international monetary sources remains unrelenting, the visit did much to clear the air over the issue.



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to US regulations that not only exist but which are likely to be enforced in the future. Which means that any arms deal is subject to review and change depending on the whims and preferences of the US Administration. India also has a massive trade surplus with the Soviets which can be offset to pay for Soviet weaponry, while US arms deals are purely commercial deals paid for in hard cash.

In any event, whatever Shultz achieved by his visit is likely to be neutralised to some extent by the covert and intriguing moves taking place between Moscow and New Delhi. Foreign Ministry sources hint that something major is in the offing, a possibility that has been heightened following the Moscow visit of Rajiv Gandhi last week.

By last fortnight, there were strong indications that the "something major" was the possible visit to India by Soviet President Yuri Andropov which, if it materialises, would be his first outside the Soviet Union since he stepped into Brezhnev's shoes. Historic as the occasion would be, it would also confirm Soviet acknowledgement of India's prominence in the region and in international affairs, something that the US has so far conveniently ignored.

—DILIP BOBB

GUARAT

## Faction Fighting

THE SILENT war raging for nearly two years between Chief Minister Madhavsinh Solanki and two of his senior colleagues, Finance Minister Sanat Mehta and Health Minister Manoharsinh Jadeja, took a dramatic turn last fortnight. Notices were suddenly served with show-cause notices by the disciplinary committee of the Gujarat Pradesh Congress Committee(I) (GPCC-I), the questions raised had only nuisance value. And Mehta and Jadeja soon turned the tables on their opponents.

The main issue for which both of them were served notices was for attending an inaugural function at Dhoraji organised by Arvind Patel who was expelled from the Congress(I) for anti-party activities in 1981. However, Patel was re-admitted last year by Chiman Mehta, former acting president of GPCC(I). At the GPCC(I) executive committee meeting last fortnight, Chiman Mehta, a staunch supporter of Solanki, vociferously advocated that disciplinary action be taken against the ministers for going to the meeting. The notice was then served.

**Perilous Charges:** In their replies, Sanat Mehta and Jadeja have not minced words. They have made it clear that they have been



(From top) Solanki, Mehta and Jadeja: dramatic turn

rapped on the knuckles for ridiculous and almost puerile charges, when others blatantly violate party discipline and get away. Says Sanat Mehta: "I went for the function as the Gujarat State Financial Corporation had given a sizeable loan to the new factory. Now, are there any rules that a minister can

attend only certain functions?"

Before going to the Dhoraji function in mid-April, Jadeja had spoken to G.K. Moonpanar, AICC(I) general secretary and Sanat Mehta had spoken to Rajendra Kumari Bajpayee, AICC(I) general secretary and they had not been told not to go. The GPCC(I) President, Mahant Vijaydasji, state agriculture minister, only added to the confusion when he said: "By just attending a function, it cannot be considered a breach of discipline."

While Sanat Mehta has only one charge listed on his notice, Jadeja has two more. He has been asked why he did not campaign in the Limdi by-election after the GPCC(I) had directed him to. Jadeja had flatly refused, insisting that the party leadership had not taken him into confidence when selecting a candidate from Limdi as he was from that area. This seemed a deliberate move by Solanki to humiliate Jadeja, an emerging Saurashtra leader.

Another charge was that Jadeja had refused to refute or condemn statements issued by the Saurashtra Rajput Yuvak Maha-sangh asking Rajputs not to vote for the Congress(I). The Rajput community felt that Solanki had humiliated Jadeja by not granting him permission to sell off part of his Rajkot palace land so as to pay income tax dues of over Rs 65 lakh. Consequently, the income tax authorities auctioned the land (INDIA TODAY, April 15). Asked an amused Jadeja: "Am I supposed to refute and condemn statements made by scores of people every day? If I did, I would not be able to do anything else."

**Official Hypocrisy:** In fact, the notices underlined the hypocrisy of the GPCC(I). Charges have been made against Sanat Mehta and Jadeja on numerous occasions in the last two years but the GPCC(I) and the state leadership have never bothered to defend them. Jinabhai Darji, the executive director of the 20-point programme who has been given Cabinet status, has time and again made derogatory statements against numerous ministers, but no action has been even contemplated against him. This fortnight, Harihar Khambolja, minister of state for finance and planning, attended a function at Viramgam arranged by Prabashankar Master, an RSS leader.

The two ministers are most likely to emerge victorious from the tussle. The GPCC(I) cannot take action as both are members of the AICC(I). The persistent rumour that Solanki will drop Sanat Mehta and Jadeja is probably only a rumour as Solanki is not likely to drop two of the best men in his Cabinet. In that context, the skirmish last fortnight appears to have been born out of frustration.

—RAMESH MENON



The LDB headquarters in Patna (left)

Machinery S  
actions

BIHAR

## Cooperative Capers

IT HAS been a lean summer for the farmers who sprinkled their fields with Hara Bahar, a fertiliser supplied by the Bihar State Cooperative Marketing Union (Biscomaun). As the agricultural season wore on they had to endure the agony of watching their crops withering away in the fields, stricken by an unknown blight. By the time they realised that the fertiliser they had used was nothing but a mixture of sand and clay it was too late to save their crops. All that could be done by then was to hold meetings to publicise their grievances and denounce Biscomaun.

For once, Biscomaun was quick to react to the charges. Biscomaun Chairman Tapeshwar Singh, MP, hastily gathered the press together to announce that an inquiry would be held and if any companies were found to have supplied spurious stuff they would be blacklisted and asked to compensate the farmers. Tapeshwar Singh also denied charges of high level corruption in Biscomaun saying that reports that had appeared in a local newspaper were "false and vindictive".

Tapeshwar Singh's confi-

dent assurances to the press that the fertiliser scandal would be probed thoroughly have, however, been treated with scepticism by most people in the state. Practically everybody knows that inquiry commissions have come and gone but Biscomaun and indeed all the other major cooperative organisations in the state are in shambles and the extent of corruption in each is unbelievable.

Corruption has touched such peaks in the cooperative movement that for once even the lethargic state Government has felt impelled to take action. Mohinder Singh, an officer reputed for his toughness, was recently

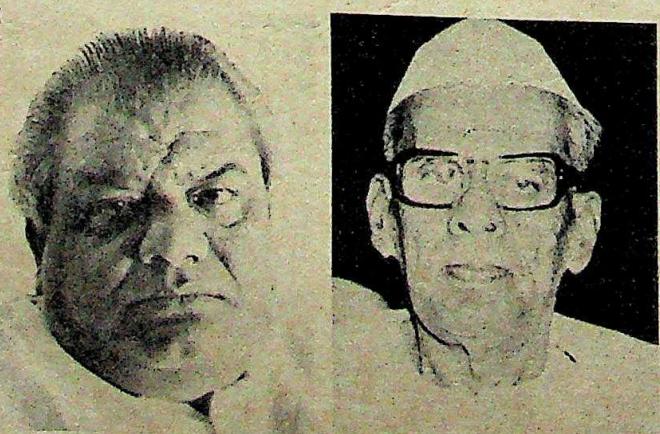
posted as commissioner in the Cooperatives Department and given a mandate to try and rout out some of the corruption. Mohinder Singh admits candidly that he has been aware of the enormity of the task ahead of him but says: "I do not know if I will succeed but I have come here with a purpose."

The state Government has not been the only one to express concern recently about the working of the cooperatives. During the course of the year the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Nabard), which oversees the activities of cooperatives on behalf of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), has repeatedly taken Bihar cooperatives to task for their appalling corruption. The Nabard reports emphasise that the

situation is much the same in the three apex cooperatives in the state - Biscomaun which is a marketing cooperative, the Land Development Bank (LDB) and the Bihar State Cooperative Bank (BSCB), both of which handle credit for farmers.

**Numerous Cases:** The cases being handled by the social vigilance cell appointed by the state government to deal with the cooperative bodies will also help to give some idea of the vast sums of money that are being siphoned out from the coffers of the cooperative bodies in the state. Since 1975 till this date the cell has probed 2,076 cases.

RIHAN SINGH



Tapeshwar Singh (left) and M.P. Singh: powerful control

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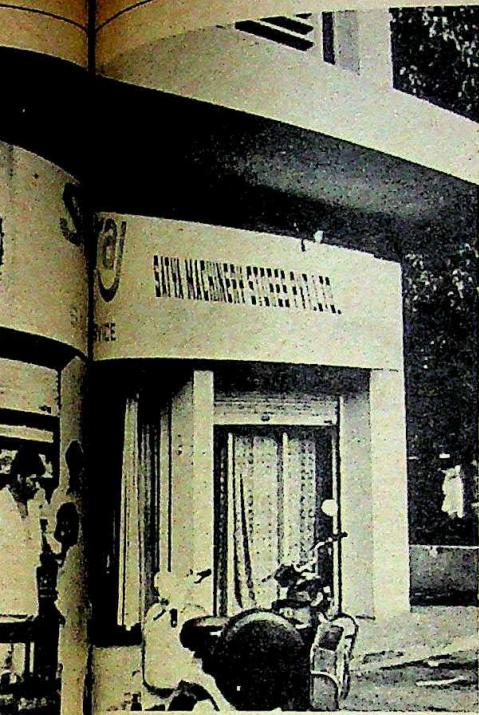
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Machinery Stores office in the building:

Cooperatives have been trying to combat corruption. Mohinder Singh has been appointed head of the committee to try and curb corruption. He has been working hard to succeed but has not been able to do so recently.

The Vigilance Cell is still investigating cases worth Rs 4 crore and another Rs 7 crore has been practically written off after a batch of small cooperatives was dissolved in 1976-77.

Many of the cases on record show that cooperative societies are frequently a positive menace to villagers. In one typical instance recently three villagers in Purnea got distress warrants for the recovery of BSCB loans that they had never taken. When they went to court it was found that they were not even members of the cooperative. An inquiry later revealed that the local office-bearers of the cooperative had forged their signatures and pocketed the loans.

In May the Cooperative Department received a complaint from Satyadeo Tiwary, a Congress(I) MLA, Abdul Razak Ansari and Amanat Ali from the post of chairman, vice-chairman and honorary secretary respectively of the Ranchi Khundi Central Cooperative Bank for alleged misappropriation of funds totalling more than Rs 4.13 lakh.

In another similar case in Jagdishpur in the Lakhimpur district, 14 villagers were served distress warrants. Here Shiv Prasad Pandit, the cooperative society secretary, had forged

their signatures. Mohinder Singh says that from 1977-78 to 1982-83 Rs 218 crore has been distributed as loans to members of various societies. He adds grimly: "On paper, yes. But nobody knows how much has gone to real members."

BSCB has been in this state for many years now. The RBI first set up a study group to look into its workings in the mid-'50s. Later in 1975 the Datey Commission was set up in another desperate attempt to set right the organisation. Nearly all the criticism made by the Datey Commission still holds true.

One major failing pointed out by the commission was that the machinery to supervise the distribution of credit was insufficient. But if anything the commission's well-meaning suggestions have only increased the scope. The commission had warned that nothing could be done as long as credit distribution was left in the hands of village level workers and honorary secretaries. So, in the wake of its report, paid managers were appointed to improve debt recovery and put a check on illicit dealings.

This move has, however, backfired badly. Mohinder Singh admits that of the 4,000 appointments 1,100 have had to be cancelled as they were found to be "illegal and made for a consideration". A Vigilance Department inquiry has been ordered to examine the appointments.

**Worse Mess:** LDB is in an even worse state. Its functions are to dole out long-term loans and supply subsidised agricultural inputs and implements. Here also there is case after case where farmers suddenly find distress warrants arriving at their doorstep for loans they have never taken. Worse still in one recent case the vigilance cell found that 150 farmers who were supposed to have received pumpsets in Lauria, Bettiah, Nautan, Baria, Majholia and Ramnagar had not received a single one. Seven officials working in LDB's Muzaffarpur branch were later suspended. Six have, however, already been reinstated.

In another case recently in Kahra Block in Saharsa, LDB records showed that it had distributed pumpsets and money for tubewells to all the 200 families in the area. When an official team went to the spot to verify these claims they found that only five pumpsets had been distributed. Nabard in fact has estimated that over 20 per cent of the loans given out by LDB are fraudulent.

Such stories abound in LDB. Chairman Srinarayan Singh claims that the organisation has helped to irrigate 5.08 lakh hectares of land by floating loans worth Rs 165.02

crore. Nabard officials discount such claims and say that the flagrant corruption negates the good it may be doing. At the village level LDB officials and pumpset dealers work in tandem through touts who promise loans if the villagers agree to buy certain brands of pumpsets. In one case recently Raktu Sahni of Kanti in Muzaffarpur agreed to buy a pumpset on these terms. He later found himself saddled with a pumpset without any of the crucial accessories to go with it.

Cases of this kind have led one World Bank Expert Jacob Imtrotor to remark caustically that "the more schemes you sanction to the LDB the more misery they will bring to the farmers of the state".

**Entrenched Family:** The grand old man of the cooperative movement in Bihar is no doubt Tapeswar Singh, who has presided over the fortunes of Biscoalm and LDB by rotation for the last 15 years. Along with Mathura Prasad Singh who heads BSCB, Tapeswar Singh has managed to concentrate a good deal of power in his own hands. Tapeswar Singh vigorously denies all the charges of personal corruption that are flung at him. All the same there can be no doubt of his family's close connections with the cooperatives.

One close relative who is highly placed in LDB is his nephew Birendra Singh Gautam, the secretary-cum-administrative officer of the organisation. Gautam says openly: "Tapeswar Babu has devoted his whole life to the cooperative movement. It is only natural that his words are respected and his long association with some of his friends and relations are here."

Tapeswar Singh's relatives also maintain close contacts with LDB in other ways. The Satya Machinery Stores belonging to Tapeswar Singh's son-in-law in Patna has its premises in the LDB building. The outfit has an agency for Swaraj tractors and its Marketing Manager Girija Prasad says: "Our brand is very popular among farmers and we sell 60 to 65 tractors every year. We have agents in villages who contact farmers and obtain their demand. If a farmer is in a hurry we get the loan sanctioned by the board of directors, sometimes by high officials."

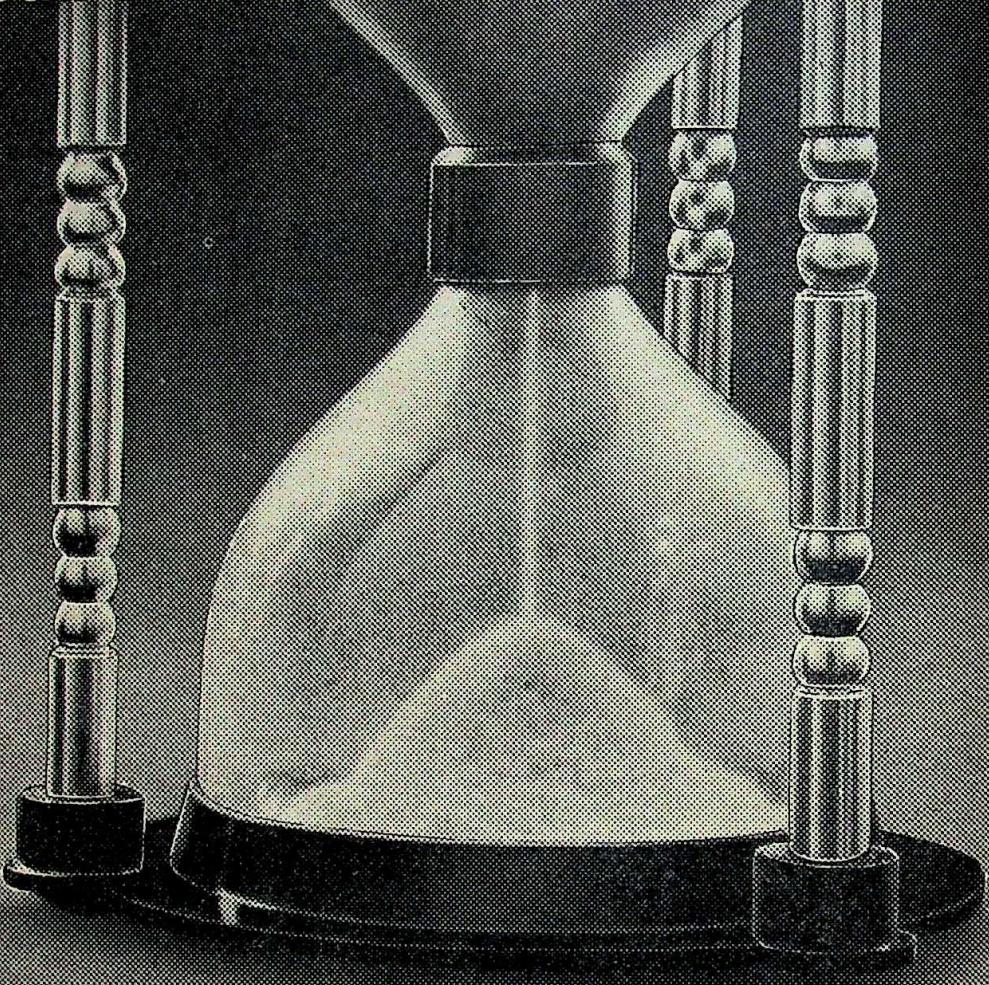
One way or the other there can be no denying that the cooperative movement is in need of a thorough clean-up. Chief Minister Jagannath had tried to stem the rot once before when the Ahmed Commission was appointed in the '70s. However, the chief minister had it wound up prematurely on the ground that it was a waste of money. It remains to be seen whether he will persevere with his latest effort.

-FARZAND AHMED

Mohinder Singh:  
difficult task

due to his long association with some of his friends and relations are here."

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PUNJAB

# Material Benefits

PUNJAB's Khadi and Village Industries Board has become the focal point of a war of attrition between Chief Minister Darbara Singh and the dissidents within his party. Established to help the state's languishing artisans, the board has instead, over the years, seen lakhs of rupees find their way into the hands of politicians as its newly-appointed Chairman Gurdev Singh Bakshiwala found. However, what really got things moving at the Government's end was the discovery that many of the beneficiaries were dissident members of the ruling Congress(I).

The clean-up operation began last year when Bakshiwala stumbled upon the fact that many Congress(I) members had taken huge loans for non-existent industries. He served notices on defaulters and forwarded cases to revenue collectors for the recovery of about Rs 3 crore as land revenue — only to discover that these were politicians with considerable clout. A plea to the chief minister to "rejuvenate the pauperised board" met with little response until dissident activity threatened Darbara Singh's seat of power, and the board scandal proved to be a good stick to beat them with.

**Powerful Defaulters:** Bakshiwala's efforts unearthed some interesting facts: among the beneficiaries of the loans are prominent dissident Congress(I) members Amarjit Kaur, a Rajya Sabha member from

Punjab, Rajinder Kaur Bhattal, minister of state for Housing and Tourism, and former minister Pandit Mohan Lal, currently treasurer of the party's state unit. Also involved are several lower-level politicians and their minions.

According to Bakshiwala, Amarjit Kaur set up the Sugar Bushgram Udyog Samiti at Ahmednagar in Sangrur district in 1978. She and her relatives owe the board Rs 8,43 lakh, the first instalment for which was due in March 1980—not a paisa has been returned, says the board chairman. The loan,

which was given at an interest of 4 per cent, has been misused, he says, and there is no trace of the khangsari unit that was to have been put up with the money. "The unit has not even applied for a power connection for the past five years. We are seeking full recovery," says an irate Bakshiwala. Kaur's only reaction has been an indifferent one. "How come the Government has now woken up?" she asks.

Bhattal is the proverbial case of charity beginning at home. She was member-secretary of the board when her husband, along with his relatives, set up the

Chhangaliwala Gram Udyog Samiti at Lehragaga in Sangrur district, and received a loan to set up a brick kiln, which the board now says, "never came into existence". The amount, taken in March 1973, now totals Rs 2.19 lakh of which only Rs 22,000 has been returned.

But the most interesting case is proba-

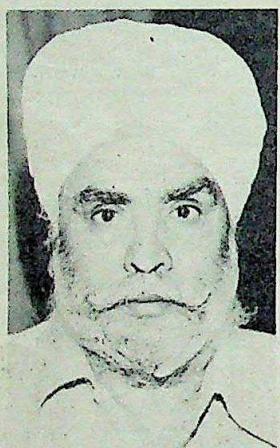
bly that of Pandit Mohan Lal, now a minister. While he was chairman of the board, Lal formed a trust called Khadi Samiti in Jullundur, to which he advanced staggering Rs 55 lakh for the development of khadi and village industries. With the relations between Lal and the then chief minister Giani Zail Singh being obvious, questions were asked about the loan. Unfeet-faced Lal is said to have performed many strategically-timed floor-crossings, remain on the right side of the rulers, ostensibly to check recovery of the loan which was due in 1978-79—he joined the Janata Party in 1977, returning to the Congress(I) after Mrs Gandhi's victory. Questioned about the loan, he takes the stand that since the money was given to the trust, it is for the trust to return it—he, however, continues to be chairman.

**Exploited:** Other defaulters who have been identified by Bakshiwala include relatives of Bhattal, former chief minister and Akali stalwart Parkash Singh Badal, Development Minister Santokh Singh Randhawa, Education Minister Harcharan Singh Ajnawala and several others. Defaulting institutions include the Kalsi Gramodyog Sansthan, Dina Nagar, Gurdaspur, Kamla Gramodyog Samiti, Hadidpur, Kapurthala, Majitha Gramodyog Samiti, Majitha, Amritsar, Anil Gramodyog Samiti, Chheherta, Amritsar, and Mukti Gramodyog Samiti, Muktsar. The board served 1,400 notices in April, but recoveries have been very few and isolated. In some cases, alleges the chairman, the files have vanished without a trace. "Surely," he quips, "there is a mix-up of board officials and beneficiaries."

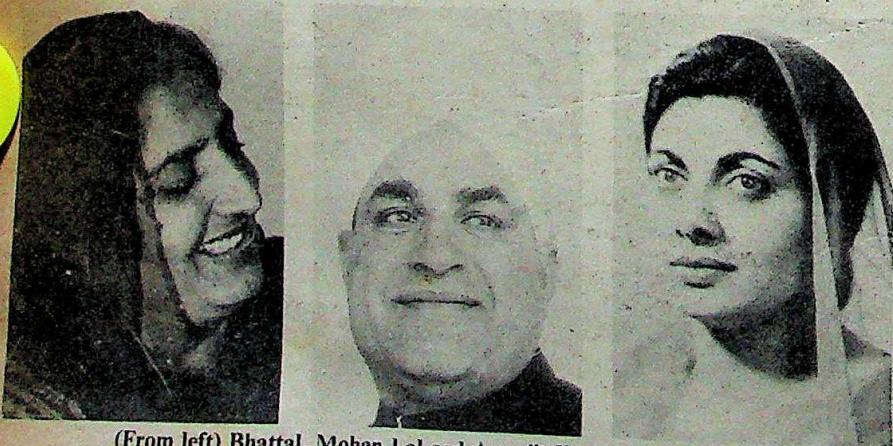
Bakshiwala's findings indicate to what extent to which the board has been exploited to siphon off funds to the wrong people. Of the 21,000 loans, only a fraction have reached those they were meant for: carpenters, weavers, cobblers and blacksmiths who have been diligently paying back their loans. Over 50 per cent of the total amount has been misused. Says Bakshiwala: "There is open looting. Take any samiti having anything to do with politicians, and you discover a defaulter. They have not been legally prosecuted so far."

Defaulting politicians, however, claim innocence and allege that the "chief minister is exploiting these innocent deals to save his gaddi." Both the dissidents and Darbara Singh have gone to the prime minister for intercession in the matter. Says Singh: "Their files tell their own tale. Let them reply to our notices. Why are they scared of the notices? Meanwhile, the issue awaits a final decision from the prime minister's house."

—GOBIND THAKUR



Bakshiwala: major problems



(From left) Bhattal, Mohan Lal and Amarjit Kaur: serious allegations

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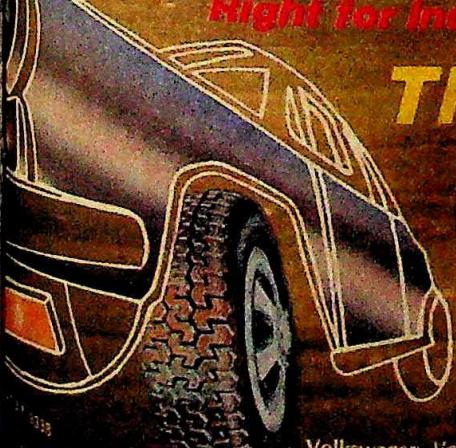
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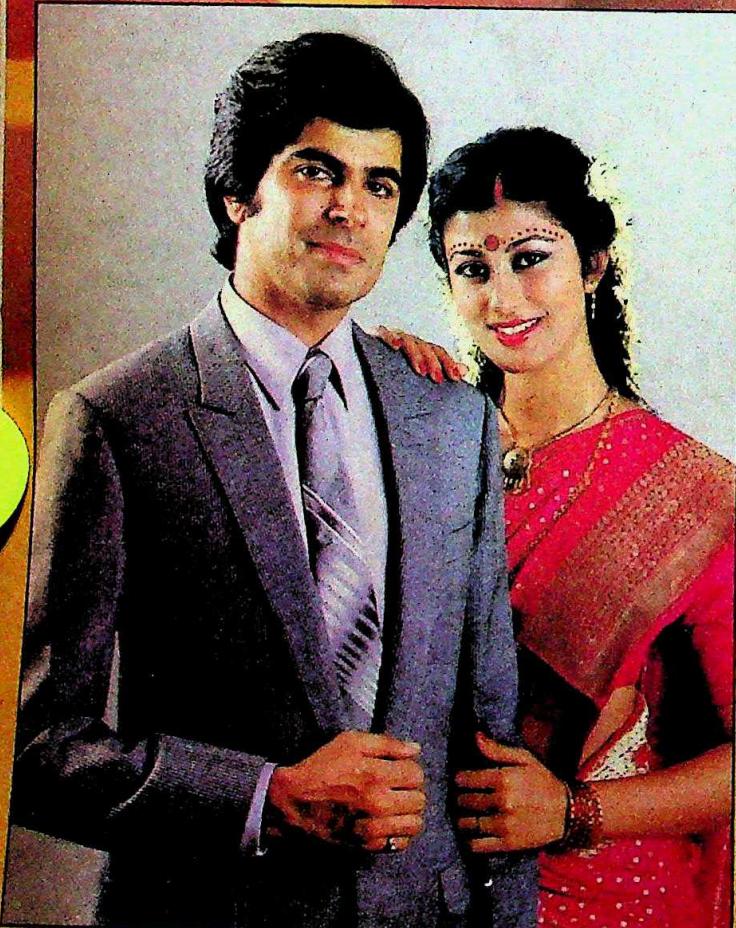


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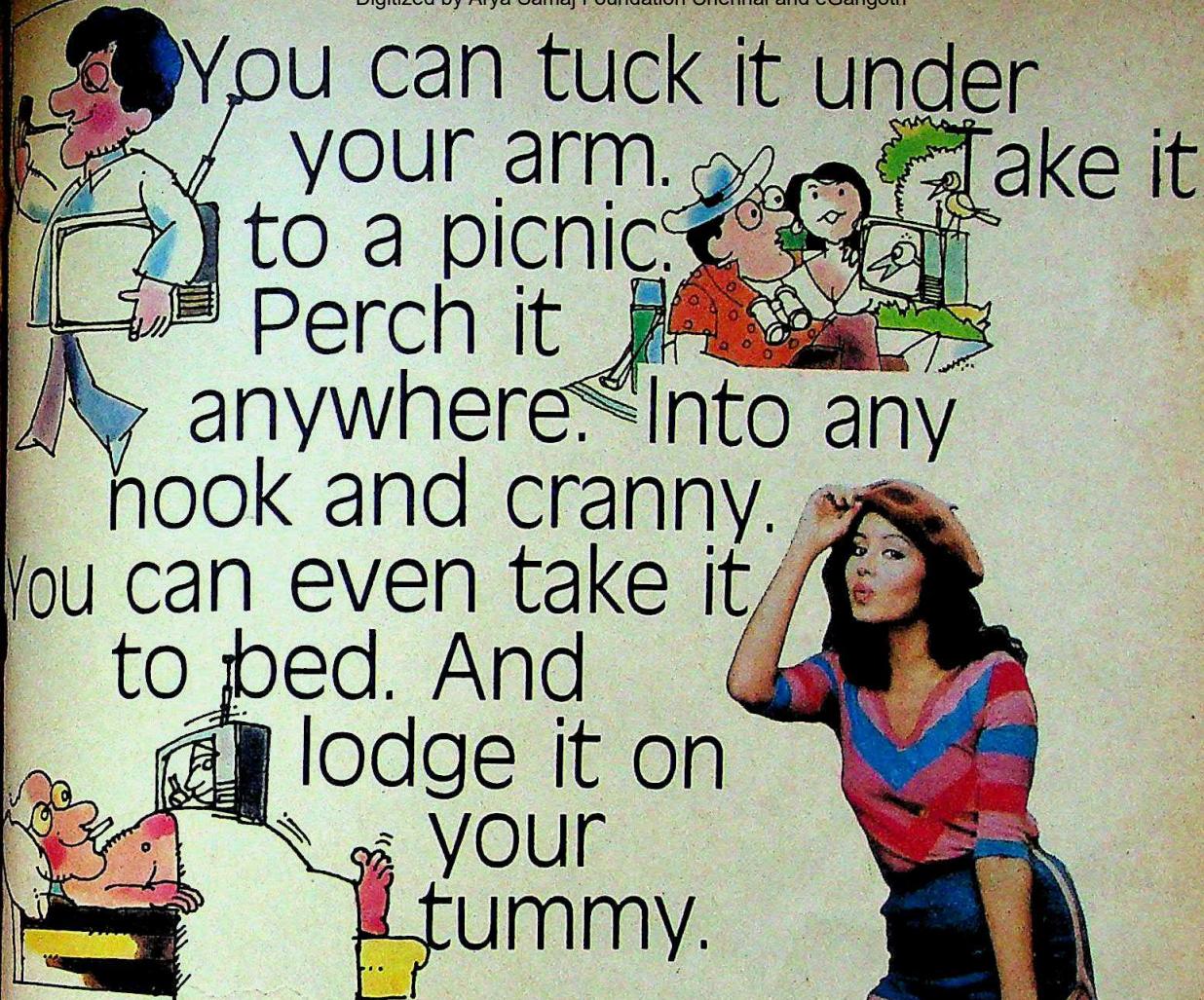
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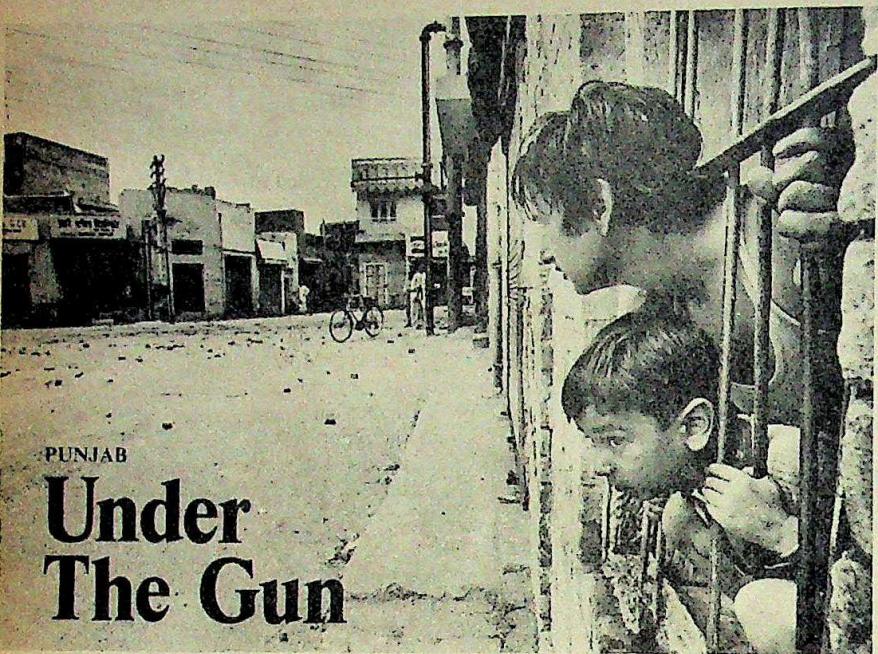
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PUNJAB

## Under The Gun

Jullundur under curfew: avoidable crisis

EVEN as politicians dither over solutions to the Punjab crisis, the problem is inexorably assuming frightening dimensions. Last fortnight opened with a mini-communal riot in Jullundur. A few days later, the police clashed with armed Nihangs who had beheaded a schoolteacher in Baba Bakala as they paraded through the main bazaar with their gory trophy. This clash was followed by bomb blasts and clashes between the police and Nihangs at Tarn Taran and Chandigarh.

The Jullundur riot could, like all other communal riots, easily have been avoided if the authorities had taken a little care. Trouble erupted after the Nihangs erected a flagpole on the grounds of the Sodhal Mandir, an old institution in the city that houses both a gurudwara and a temple. The police who were present at the time intervened only later when the flagpole was already up.

**Angry Reaction:** Indignant at this action the Hindus of the town retaliated by organising hartals in some bazaars and taking out processions. Tension went up one notch when a parcel bomb blew up in the offices of a local newspaper, and turned into major violence on June 27, after the Punjab Hindu Sangathan called for a Punjab bandh.

If nothing else the local government was guilty of not nipping the trouble in the bud. It had all the time in the world to bring the situation under control. Instead it allowed Nihangs and Hindu villagers to stream into the city all primed for a confrontation. Finally when the Government tried to get the

Nihangs out of the town it was too late to prevent a series of running street battles. When the police fired to disperse the mobs, three people were killed.

But Jullundur was only the first flash-point. Hardly a single day went by without some report of violence. And as the violence gets more frequent simple law and order problems are immediately beginning to acquire communal overtones. The Baba Bakala clash was nothing but a straightforward duel between the police and a group of Nihangs who were brazenly marching through the town market carrying aloft the head of their victim.

The Akalis, however, saw it differently. Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale promptly issued a call to all Sikhs asking them to make a show of solidarity by marching to Baba Bakala. Akali chief Sant Harchand Singh Longowal, in his determination not to be outflanked by Bhindranwale, endorsed the call, adding in an inflammatory tone: "Such events force us to reconsider whether we have to live in India."

The Tarn Taran incident was not very different. The police clashed with Nihangs who were trying to demolish a building. When the police tried to intervene the Nihangs fired back. In Chandigarh it was two groups of Nihangs who fought each other for possession of a gurudwara. The toll: two dead and several injured.

But as the bouts of violence became increasingly more frequent, there was little sign that the Government was about to come to grips with the situation. Mrs Gandhi's determination to get tough with the Akalis has put

an end to all dialogue for the time. Longowal's contemptuous reply to Gandhi's charges is: "Let Mrs Gandhi point a judge of her choice to find out who has fathered violence in Punjab and she will know the truth."

**Scornful Rejection:** The Opposition's efforts to break the impasse were met with an equal lack of enthusiasm by both sides. Mrs Gandhi refused to accept any suggestion from the opposition leaders' side. Some indication of the Government's attitude came when 16 Congress(I) MPs suggested a statement describing them as "pioneers of Working-class politics".

President Zail Singh's harsh comments about the Punjab imbroglio were treated with scorn by the Akalis. Longowal dismissed them as "anti-Sikh" and said: "If Zail Singh is so concerned about peace in his home state, let him advise Gandhi to appoint a judicial commission to probe violence. He is evidently motivated by party politics, lowering the status of the opposition in his august office and showing a total ignorance of Sikh history."

If all this were not enough there were indications that the Centre's attempts to revamp the state administration were also going awry. Inspector General of Police Pritam Singh Bhinder who has been given absolute powers to tackle the law and order situation in the state is already at loggerheads with Chief Minister Darbara Singh. The chief minister is blocking some of Bhinder's moves to transfer officers at the level of MP's in his ministry. Darbara Singh has taken his case to the way to Delhi on the plea that his authority is being undermined by the new Pilot into their week-long absence. Bhinder's along with MP's along with the rest of the Congress(I) work

Congress(I). The differences in the camp are also showing more clearly. Badal reportedly plans to lead peace marches through the trouble-torn cities of Punjab when he returns from his trip to scow. His militant colleagues, Shri Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee chief Gurcharan Singh Tohra, Jagdev Talwandi, MP, and Sukhjinder Singh are still unabashedly speaking the language of violence and asking the masses to be ready for a major onslaught.

Meanwhile, the Akalis are also searching for a new strategy that will bring the Government to its knees. On August 15, dharma-yuddha enters its second year. There is no sign yet that either side is willing to budge. But as both sides gird themselves for the next round the continuing mutual distrust in the state.

—GOBIND

JAMMU &amp; KASHMIR

# The Second Battle

THE CONGRESS(I) has lost Jammu and Kashmir to the National Conference (NC) at the hustings, but it has launched a second battle—with what it believes to be irrefutable evidence of the "fraudulent victory" in the valley. Said Working President Kamalapati Tripathi: "Not only was systematic violence used against Congress(I) workers and supporters throughout the election campaign, and even after the poll, there is irrefutable evidence of unfair practices in connection with the polling. The directives of Election Commission have been grossly violated. Facts speak louder than the official commissions."

Tripathi's indignation is based on the

status quo of the over half-a-dozen

giant voters who have been collecting

evidence of the alleged rig-

ing through there during the June elections.

Centre's attempts include Union Minister

for Agriculture Arif

General of Mohammed Khan and Union

Minister for Law and

Affairs Ghulam

already at Azad. Later Arun Nehru,

member of the ruling

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Rigging Charges: After his

Nehru said: "I have yet

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—GOBIND THAKUR

because the party plans to

lodge legal complaints, party functionaries claim to have collected evidence of rigging such as:

► Over 2,000 ballot papers of each assembly constituency were allegedly distributed to NC workers one day before the polling in the valley. These ballots after being marked in favour of the NC were stuffed in the ballot boxes one hour before the polling started.

► Genuine ballot boxes were allegedly replaced with new ballot boxes in over a dozen constituencies known to be Congress(I) strongholds.

► Registered voters were not allowed to vote.

► In some constituencies ballot papers are reported to be missing. Each booth should be issued ballot papers in chronological order but in Anantnag district for example

large blocks of serial numbers were allegedly missing.

► Only pro-NC officials were deputed for election duty and not the central police force.

► The number of votes recovered in some ballot boxes was more than the number of votes recorded to have been actually polled.

Action: Some specific cases of alleged rigging began to crop up just after the poll, and action has already been taken. On June 9, for example, the Rajouri district police officers recovered over 3,000 ballot papers along with the boxes from the residence of Mohammed Akram, the returning officer for the same constituency from where the NC candidate was elected. According to the report lodged by Mirza Abdul Rashid, the defeated candidate, Akram, had illegally taken all the ballot papers voting the Congress(I) to his house soon after the declaration of the result on June 6. Three days later Akram was caught red-handed with the ballot papers. Later, the state Government registered a criminal case against him—but no disciplinary action has yet been taken.

Further supporting the Congress(I)'s charges of rigging, Krishan Chand Pant, former Union minister and the party's chief overseer of the elections, claimed that the ruling party in the state had smuggled out ballot papers duly signed by the returning officers for distribution amongst the NC workers. In fact, the Congress(I) leaders claim to have submitted over a lakh ballot papers from the state to the Election Commission. Said Tytler: "I have purchased 300 ballot papers from Srinagar for Rs 600. The people in Kashmir are peddling them like apples and cherries." The Election Commission declines to comment on these allegations, saying that it is looking into them, having last fortnight received, and recorded the complaints in writing.

Evidence: Congress(I) leaders make another serious charge that they claim to have conclusive evidence of—that in many constituencies pre-stamped ballots were recovered from outside the polling booths. The returning officer of Indramal constituency, for example, wrote in his report that "ballot papers were found in the ballot box in batches. (As a result) the ballot papers in that box were



Farooq casting his vote: allegations of rigging

not taken up for counting but were rejected under the circumstances." Yet—despite protests—votes were counted the very same day and the result announced in favour of the NC.

In the same constituency, Congress(I) leaders caught a junior police official stamping ballot papers in favour of NC inside the polling booth. Avtar Chand, the police official, later confessed to the returning officer in writing: "I was directed to destroy Congress(I) votes and canvass for the NC inside the polling booth." According to the Election Commission rules, no government official on election duty can canvass for any political party, but the Congress(I) says that over a dozen officials who refused to cooperate with the ruling party in the state were actually punished with transfer orders.

Congress(I) leaders also claim that in



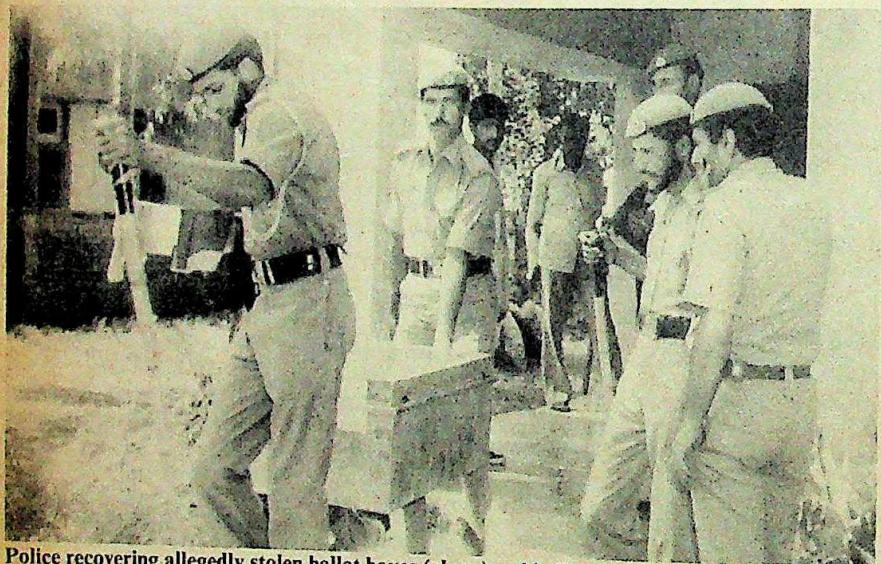
Tytler (left) and Khan: strident charges

143 polling booths in six assembly constituencies of Srinagar, the number of votes recovered from the ballot boxes during the counting were far more than those actually polled. For example, in Abikorpora, Bhandare claims that by lunch 614 votes had been

counted as against 453 total polled.

INTERESTINGLY, the Congress(I) has received considerable support from all the opposition parties such as the People's Conference, Bharatiya Janata CPI(M) and Panther's Party, which have demanded a review of many constituencies. These parties join the Congress(I) in pointing to the closed nature of the police bureaucracy in the state to explain the NC's ability to rig the elections.

The local ruling party has won a large number of officials by selectively promoting state cadres, or, in some cases, employing them giving them extensions of retirement with the result that their sympathies were with the NC and not its rival. Congress(I) maintains that their com-



Police recovering allegedly stolen ballot boxes (above) and ballot papers marked in favour of NC found outside polling booths: massive rigging?



#### ARUN NEHRU

## "There has to be a repoll"

SITTING in a modestly furnished room in the Sanjay Gandhi Memorial Trust's office in New Delhi, MP and Congress(I) functionary Arun Nehru is screening the pile of information he has collected on the alleged rigging of the J & K elections. In one corner of the room lies an empty ballot-box he brought back last fortnight from a visit to the state as leader of the three-member Congress panel to make a detailed report for ANC President Mrs Indira Gandhi. He spoke to *Prabhu Chandra* on the evidence which his party has gathered for filing a writ petition against the poll. Excerpts:

Q. On what basis is your party claiming about the rigging in the election?

A. What has happened in constituency has been repeated in other areas. Basically, there has been gross violation of electoral laws in the situation is really frightening. It is a shocking situation. There is so much about it that I am dithering where to start from.

Q. Why has it been raised after Congress(I)'s defeat?

A. It is not a question to be answered in terms of defeat or victory. We have only recovered thousands of duly sealed and signed ballots but also sealed ballot-boxes which were not taken into

count while body should electoral system not going to constituencies also where voting practices national Conference

Q. Do you

A. We file Election Commission our complaints as going on them.

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A. The rule of the whole sanctity of the were taken on elections. Results were

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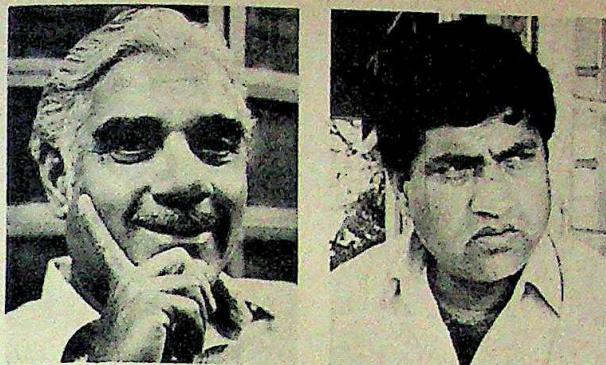
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The NC has its own story to tell.  
Farooq has retreated into a  
After the adverse publicity, his  
words were clearly echoed in the Go  
or's address to the Assembly last  
in which he claimed that  
actions in the state were "fair and  
Said a spokesman of the state  
overnment: "If these allegations  
true then how could they win in  
? We could have misused of  
machinery there too. Anyhow,  
I want to comment after the  
an elections which they claim were held  
an democracy."

**Strategic Charges:** The "poisonous pro  
paga" against Farooq—loyal NC leaders  
ain—is part of the Congress(I)'s strate  
to explain their defeat to Mrs Gandhi.



Bhandare (left) and Pilot: in-depth probe

Said an NC leader: "Arif, Pant, Azad and Tytler have to account for their role. After all they had promised the Jammu & Kashmir Government on a platter to Rajiv and his mother. To conceal their failure they have devised this mysterious plan."

Yet another explanation offered for the anti-Farooq campaign is a strategy to keep the chief minister on the defensive, to prevent him from becoming another popular opposition leader, from becoming another NTR. Farooq's offer to hold an opposition parties conclave in Srinagar has considerably annoyed the Congress(I) high command. Since he is the only Muslim chief minister in the country, his ties to the opposition parties may drive the Muslim community away from the Congress(I) in the 1985 Parliament elections. In that case, it would suit the Congress(I) to keep trouble brewing with rigging charges in the sensitive area. And with its recent decision to file 40 writ petitions against the winning candidates, the NC's future in the state is far from settled.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

count while declaring the results. Somebody should go and look at the whole electoral system in the state. And we are not going to file writ petitions in the constituencies where we lost but in those also where we have won to expose the rigging practices adopted by the National Conference.

**Q. Do you think that the Election Commission has done its job judiciously?**

A. We have a grouse against the Election Commission too. We sent our complaints to it when the polling was going on but no action was taken on them.

**Q. Do you think that the state machinery was misused?**

A. The most disappointing aspect of the whole show is that there was no sanctity of the state's treasury. Ballots were taken out and destroyed after the elections. Returning officers declared the results without counting all the votes. It has happened in Kargil, Ra  
ooths, the total votes recovered from the ballot-boxes were twice the number of votes polled in those polling booths.

**Q. Do you believe that if elections were not rigged your party would have won more seats?**

A. Surely, it would have made a difference of eight to 10 seats in the valley itself. It will be known in the courts. They can't get away from reality. We will request the court to summon all the records which have been denied to us so far by both the Election Commission and the state Government. Moreover, we

have asked the commission to seal all the documents immediately.

**Q. But how come National Conference could not rig the elections in Jammu where it lost badly?**

A. National Conference did some

farcie. We have evidence to prove that in few areas police officials were running the election. Poor candidates had no access to the outside world because of an inadequate communication system. When the election officials were partisan, candidates had no one to complain to.

**Q. How many ballots have you recovered from the state and from where?**

A. We have recovered over a lakh ballot-papers belonging to over 40 assembly seats. In fact, ballot-papers and boxes are available even now on the streets of Srinagar for a price. You pay for them and have them. Our problem now is that we can't collect all the ballots because people want to keep them as their personal mementoes. And we will disclose our sources to the court or any independent body.

**Q. Do you want repoll in the entire state?**

A. Logically, because of the way in which the election has been conducted, there has to be a repoll in J & K. Farooq claims that his party will win 50 seats in case repoll is ordered. Let them agree to it. Any right minded individual who talks of democracy and human rights will find that these don't exist in J & K at all. Let there be an independent inquiry into the whole poll.

**Q. Will you demand a judicial probe?**

A. We have submitted our report to the AICC(I) president. But considering the serious lapses committed in the state we will definitely like the whole thing to be investigated. We will present the irregularities committed in each constituency. Let the court give its judgement.



Arun Nehru: "It is a shocking situation"

rigging in Jammu also but despite that we won because our workers were more vigilant. It is unprecedented in Indian democracy that the state officials refused to comply with Election Commission orders, reducing the commission to a

MAHARASHTRA

## Stumbling On

WHEN Maharashtra Chief Minister Vasantdada Patil won in the Sangli by-election last fortnight, beating his Left Front rival Santram Patil by a margin of 39,000 votes, his supporters began

to hope that a new era of political stability for the state was at hand. However, the victorious chief minister has no cause for complacency: not only did his rival manage to make serious inroads into his victory—Vasantdada's supporters had confidently predicted he would lose his deposit—but dissident activity within the Congress party also seems to be unrelenting.

Considering that Vasantdada has represented his constituency for four terms, his bagging 53,276 votes against Santram's tally of 14,187 seems unspectacular. In his turn former chief minister Antulay had managed a decisive margin of 64,000 votes over his nearest rival in his Shrivardhan constituency of Konkan in 1980.

The fight, to the end, had been rather unequal. In addition to the ruling party machinery, the sugar co-operatives threw their immense social and economic clout behind the chief minister's campaign. Strangely, even opposition parties that could normally be expected to support the rival candidate, seemed rather reluctant to do so. At first, state Janata Party chief Rajaram Babu Patil announced that in view of the drought situation in the state, his party would abstain from the campaign. Only after protests within the party became louder did the Janata Party come forward on Santram's side—however, no big-wigs of either the Janata Party, the Bharatiya Janata Party or the Congress(S) were in evidence.

**Little Support:** On his side, the 65-year-old Santram had Bombay's charismatic trade union leader Datta Samant for support. Samant had his own axe to grind: the elections would be an effective forum from which to highlight the Government's callous handling of the textile workers strike. This issue, however, was irrelevant in the elections, as there is little migration from this area to the city and therefore little sympathy for Samant's cause. But the Lal Nishan Party, to which Santram belongs, did make an all-out effort on his behalf, although Santram's following amongst rural indus-

trial workers and agricultural labour is, once again, mainly outside Sangli.

Meanwhile, certain events of last fortnight sparked off speculations about new alignments in the faction-ridden ruling party. In a surprise move, former chief minister Babasaheb Bhosale called on his predecessor A.R. Antulay for a two-and-a-half hour visit. Bhosale, who had alienated himself from his erstwhile mentor after he became chief minister, said he wanted to clear old misunderstandings, and renew the friendship between the two. Said he, "Antulay, after all, remains a major leader of Maharashtra." The subject of the speculations himself remarked coyly, "When two politicians meet... they obviously talk politics, and not about the weather."

Vasantdada also met Antulay soon after Bhosale's visit. The two were closeted for one-and-a-half hours at 'Varsha', the chief minister's official residence. Obviously, Vasantdada is keen on declaring a truce with the controversial former chief minister, whose supporters evidently have considerable potential for mischief. In just a month's time, Antulay, who was off everyone's visiting lists, seems to be back in demand in a burst of sudden popularity.

**Dissidence:** The chief minister has his hands full, even otherwise. With his

removal of Shyamrao Patil as the chairman of the Maharashtra State Cooperative Land Development Bank, he has ruffled quite a few feathers in his cabinet. Deputy Chief Minister Adik, upset about the removal of his close ally, and other slights from his chief, convened a secret strategy session with his supporters including the state party chief S.M.I. Aseer and several ministers. One of them urged him to adopt a more aggressive posture, exhorting him to behave like a deputy chief minister, and "not like a deputy secretary".

Adding to Vasantdada's cup of troubles is the unhappiness of a section of his party's MLA's over the Government's rejection of the Mandal Commission report, which called for more reservations for the backward classes. Ten MLA's sent a telegram of protest to the prime minister, and Aseer also commented that the chief minister's stand seemed over-hasty. He said he would soon be calling a meeting of party legislators to discuss the report. With no let-up on dissident activity within his party it certainly looks like Vasantdada will have to step lively if he wants to retain an effective control of his government.

—COOMI KAPOOR

MALEGAON

## Running Riot

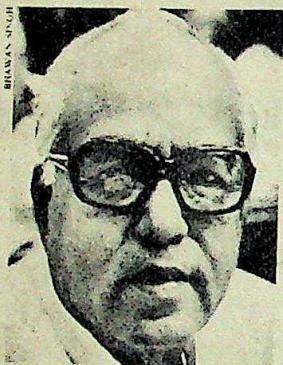
ALL IT took was one spark to ignite a communally-surcharged atmosphere in Malegaon town, a major centre just 140 km from Nasik. Within days, three persons, including a month-old baby, were killed, 30 injured, and over 500 arrested. The provocation came in the form of crackers thrown outside the Jama Masjid mosque in this thickly-populated Azad Nagar. Ramzan prayers were on.

The crackers were said to have burst to celebrate India's victory in Cup cricket, but they came one week after the win. A crowd of 300 marched to quila station to complain and soon got out of hand with the police fire-arms. The trouble triggered off bances in other nearby areas along the highway. Malegaon itself has been a disturbed area for the past year, ever since last November's riots. The violence is a sequel to a march that symbolised protest against an eighth standard history text which attributed certain references to prophet Mohammed.

In the ensuing mayhem, the Muslim community bore the brunt of the violent situation that has been reversed in time—and Nihal Ahmed, a Janata Party member from the constituency, attributes this partially to vengeful feelings which have been simmering for the past year. Residents point out that the gutted factories and looted shops were in areas Islampura, Nayapura and Gurab Ward—all clearly belonging to one community. Some others are equally bitter, and question why all the arrests, injuries and death seem confined to just one community.

**Speculations:** Opinions differ as to whether the whole thing was planned or an odd fact that the crackers were burst in a mosque, fully 24 hours after the festival being celebrated, has also come in for speculation. Given the background of communal riots and the fact that the area, recognised as being a potentially dangerous area, it seems strange that authorities have come forward to defuse the tension. Hashu Advani, leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party in the Maharashtra Assembly, said after a visit to the scene that the last time there was selective burning and looting was during the pre-planning. Ahmed refuted this.

Ahmed himself is accused of inciting passions by calling a bandh in February this year, to protest police failure to arrest students who had disturbed a college function.



Vasantdada: qualified electoral success

Riot



A shop burnt during the riot (above) and Janata  
MLA Ahmed: bitter aftermath



there have been five major riots, making the town one of the country's prime potential trouble spots. Ahmed, however, insists that earlier, once the trouble was over, harmony was restored between the communities, and no bitterness ever lingered—this, however, is no longer true, he says.

**Alienation:** One reason for the growing alienation between the two communities is said to be economic—with weaving being the mainstay of the town, a traditional system of mutual cooperation between two communities had evolved. While the Hindus supplied the yarn and collected the finished product, the Muslims did all the weaving. Now, the weavers are said to be making inroads into the traders' preserve, which is certainly the more profitable side of the business.

The ugly division in the township is symbolised by the martyrs' memorial set up here, which, unlike similar memorials in other towns set up by former chief minister Antulay, has no plaque. When, last August, the Malegaon plaque was to be unveiled with the names of five members of one community, some from the other community objected, claiming that the people selected to be so honoured were not really martyrs. Ultimately the names were removed, but the plaque was not.

Meanwhile, last fortnight, the state Government turned down an opposition request for a judicial inquiry into the riots. Feelings ran high, and some politicians insisted on making provocative speeches—proving successfully that the unfortunate incident had taught them no lessons.

—COOMI KAPOOR

BOMBAY

## Squatters' Rites

IT IS an issue that is sharply dividing Bombay city. Ranged on one side are the city's social activists, a majority of the English language journalists and civil liberties groups, and on the other, an infuriated civic administration which is gaining increasing support from the conservative middle class, the Marathi press and "save Bombay" adherents. The debate is on the rights of Bombay's 4.7 million unauthorised squatters, including a quarter of a million who live on the pavement: the question being asked is whether they are entitled to alternative accommodation, as part of their fundamental rights, if their huts are demolished.

Ever since 1981, when a writ was filed in the Supreme Court by the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) and other groups seeking to prevent the Bombay Municipal Corporation (BMC) from removing unauthorised squatters, a series of interim orders from the court has successfully prevented large-scale demolitions in the city. One of them stipulates that before any demolition can be done, Court Receiver D.S. Rajpurkar has to check whether the slums or hutments under consideration have come up after 1981. But Rajpurkar, by his own admission, is overwhelmed by the task. On one occasion it took him one hour and 45 minutes to examine the status of 18 huts.

**Major Demolitions:** This summer, Municipal Commissioner D.M. Sukthankar obviously decided enough was enough. Without a green signal from Rajpurkar, he went ahead with a series of major demolitions in May and June. Unfazed by a contempt of court case filed against him by the PUCL and howls of protest from the English language press over his bulldozing of Supreme Court orders, Sukthankar answered his critics by releasing a six-page article he wrote on "Demolitions in Bombay". He charged that the "bleeding hearts" who were eloquent in pleading for the rights of the squatters were the first to jump at the BMC when their own backyards were encroached upon.

Sukthankar disclosed to **INDIA TODAY** that he had spent the whole of last summer shuttling between Bombay and Delhi with his aides, filing affidavits to seek the Supreme Court's definitions of what constitute pavements, roads and streets, and what could be termed 'obstruction to traffic'. "The process of law is being abused and subverted. This hair-splitting has gone too far and has rendered the corporation helpless in discharging its statutory obligations to keep

was trouble earlier last June, too, over alleged slaying of cows. The Congress(I) also allegedly had its share of involvement in the escalating communal tension—it claimed that it was this party that was last November protested against the controversial history textbook. Altogether, several parties seem to have unduly exploited communal feelings to establish their links with the people, and a police officer remarked: "Political parties have been keen to outdo each other in playing on communal fervour."

Ironically enough, until Independence, Malegaon was looked upon as an example of communal harmony. This town, unlike the rest of the country, has a majority of Hindus—70 per cent of a population of 3.5 lakh. However, over the past two decades, the situation has deteriorated. Since 1963,

the roads clean and ensure the health and hygiene of the city," said he, adding that it was difficult for judges in Delhi to understand the situation in Bombay.

**Mounting Criticism:** Backing Sukthankar, Govind Talwalkar, editor of the *The Maharashtra Times*, in an editorial mocked the quixotic extent to which public interest litigation had been carried. He compared it to the distress bell Mughal emperor Jehangir used to hang outside his court: "Anyone was entitled to ring the bell, and even when the crow sat on it, everyone came rushing to the rescue." Several residents' associations in upper middle class south Bombay, as well as former mayor Boman-Behram have all congratulated the municipal commissioner on his stand. The latest to join the congratulatory chorus is Durga Bhagwat, the veteran Marathi writer and freedom fighter who has recently resigned from the vice-presidency of the PUCL. Bhagwat felt that perhaps the only way to save the city, where her family has been staying for the past 130 years, is to return the pavement dwellers to the respective linguistic areas of their origin. "Why should Bombay have to keep them when it is past its capacity?" asks Bhagwat.



Large scale demolitions (above) and  
Sukthankar: getting tough

Darshana Bhogilal, joint secretary of the Bombay PUCL, who has espoused the cause of the pavement dwellers, says the mounting criticism is because the case is being twisted out of context: "I am not suggesting that people should be allowed to pitch their tents in Flora

Fountain. We want to highlight that a problem faced by 51 per cent of the city should be handled in a humane fashion. Just clearing out the huts is not going to solve anything. Where are the people to go?" she asks. The problem of accommodating the city's squatters is not insurmountable.

#### SLUMS ORDINANCE

## Controversial

**W**HILE the predicament of Bombay's pavement dwellers is being hotly debated a new ordinance aimed at dealing with slums on public and private lands has created a new controversy. The ordinance effectively increases the powers of the authorities regarding demolitions. A comparison with the Maharashtra Regional and Town Planning Act, the parent legislation on the subject, shows why.

■ Whereas formerly, under the Act, a person indicted for unauthorised development was liable for a fine of Rs 5,000, now he can be imprisoned for up to three years.

■ The ordinance empowers the officers and servants of the planning authority to summarily remove temporary unauthorised structures, whereas formerly the planning authority had to request the district

magistrate or the commissioner of police to remove such structures.

■ Liability for unauthorised development of huts built in the last three years has been extended to encompass those which have arisen in the last seven years.

■ The offences are cognisable and non-bailable, and arrest can be made without a warrant.

Already, under the ordinance, over 75 people have been arrested in Bombay's downtown Cuffe Parade and Nariman Point areas. A social worker at Sanjay Nagar says that the arrests in the locality were reminiscent of the Emergency. People were just herded into police vans without any explanation. Even some people who are not residents of the area were picked up—Abdul Jaffar says he works in a nearby hotel and was visiting a friend when he found himself under arrest.

**Harassment:** Darshana Bhogilal, joint secretary of the Bombay PUCL char-

according to her. "There is enough land, and feasible schemes have been tested by several agencies, but implementation is lacking," she says, "in order to implement them."

**Vacant Land:** Estimates about the vacant land available in the city vary from a 10,000 hectares, and according to the PUCL the land requirement for 8 lakh slum dwellers would be as low as 1,200 acres. The tragedy is that nearly two years during the case has been going on while the state machinery has taken substantial steps to solve the problem.

Meanwhile, iconoclastic lawyer Indira Jaising who

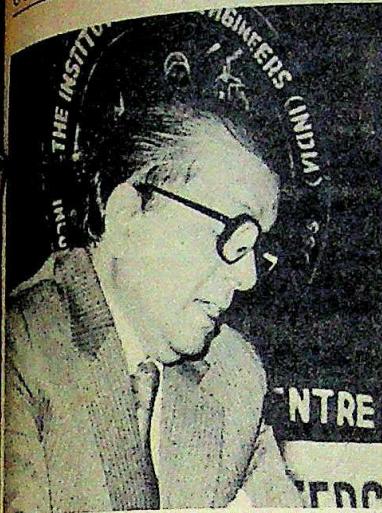
filed a writ petition on the part of the pavement dwellers before the Supreme Court takes an extreme stand that the squatters' right to squat on the pavements is a fundamental one, has recently challenged the BMC decision to remove sugarcane juice stalls from Bombay's A Ward. Jaising, fighting on behalf of the Bombay Hawkers Union, claims that despite all the hue and cry, there is more contamination in the milk served in five-star hotels than in the cane juice sold on the pavements. Meanwhile, with both the pro-and anti-squatter lobbies gearing up for action, Bombay is set to be all set for a stormy and long drawn confrontation.

— COOMI K.

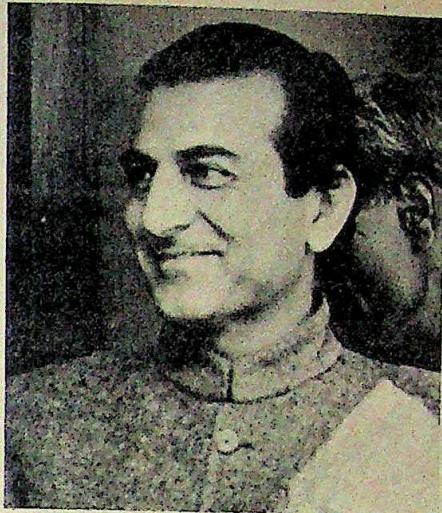
ges that the authorities, having failed in their attempt to deport hutment dwellers and demolish their huts, are now harassing them through arrests: "They are doing indirectly what they cannot do directly." The PUCL plans to challenge the ordinance.

Even supporters of slum demolition, such as former mayor Boman-Behram, are sceptical about the ordinance. Behram estimates that since 1976, slums in the selected areas have increased by 15 lakh. Sanjay Nagar's social workers say that the police, after the horse has bolted."

What it means in effect is that the implication of the ordinance is absolute gravity. The discretion of the planning authority over the city's slum population, and more than a million citizens, will be arrested, or lose their houses. The notice, I am afraid, demolition does not differentiate between a slum lord who has developed a colony and a slum dweller who might have extended his hutment by a few inches. Most of the battle for the slums is obviously from over.



Kailash Mahajan (left) and Ram Lal: costly deals



Himachal Pradesh firms which resulted in excess payment of Rs 8.81 lakh and blocking of Rs 50 lakh because various varieties of conductors bought were unnecessary. Though the firms had not been able to complete orders placed with them in 1978-79, they received the nod in 1982-83; not only that, the lapsed 1978-79 orders were revived at rates higher than those approved in April 1983.

The report comments: "In view of the requirement of various transmission lines already in hand or likely to be approved by the board for construction in the near future the procurement of conductors at this stage does not appear to be judicious."

► The purchase of nearly 30,000 insulators worth Rs 30 lakh. At the end of 1981, HPESB short-listed three firms—Jaipur Electricals, Jaishree Insulators and High Tension Insulators (HTI). After the period of finalisation of the award was extended, all three firms lowered their rates. HTI by as much as Rs 28 per insulator to Rs 92 per piece. Jaishree's offer was still better at Rs 90.98 per piece; however, it was eliminated from the race, allegedly on the basis of its past record, and on January 18, 1982, HTI was asked to supply 25,000 insulators.

Once HTI got the order, however, it said that its rate did not include excise duty—8 per cent—and Central sales tax—4 per cent—and that, these must be reimbursed by HPESB. The other firms' rates were inclusive of excise and sales tax. The demand was accepted; HTI was even asked to supply 6,500 more insulators. The Finance Department

estimated that HPESB suffered a loss of over Rs 3 lakh because it was, in effect, paying Rs 105 per piece when the second in the list, Jaipur Electricals, had tendered Rs 96.82 per piece.

► The Rs 20 lakh worth of ceramic fuse-holders and cut-outs which the CPO's office purchased directly without formal requisition by the chief engineers concerned. As these items are supposed to be bought by circle officers, the CPO's decision has been questioned by the Finance Department.

Interestingly, the orders were staggered over four months to avoid placing tenders again and again—the CPO's office is not allowed to place orders worth more than Rs 5 lakh. For example, between September 1982 and February 1983, two Punjab firms received five separate orders, and each of them was below Rs 5 lakh, although they totalled more than Rs 20 lakh. When a senior official reportedly objected to this twisting of rules, he was transferred.

HIMACHAL PRADESH

## Electrifying Charges

EVERY chief minister seems to spend a considerable amount of time cleaning up the mess left behind by previous administrations. But Chief Minister Veerbhadr Singh of Himachal Pradesh is having to deal with more than the usual quota. Hardly have the forest and water-pipe scandals stopped sending tremors through the Government than it is

appointment as chairman of HPESB in July 1981. Mahajan, formerly with Punjab's Irrigation Department had been brought to Himachal Pradesh by the then chief minister Ram Lal after retiring in 1981; Ram Lal had made the appointment without consulting the then power minister Sukh Ram. Mahajan is ex-officio chairman of the Stores Purchase Committee (SPC) which figures frequently in the audit report. Curiously, the chief purchase officer (CPO) is O.P. Mahajan,



Sukh Ram (left) and Veerbhadr Singh: coping with mismanagement

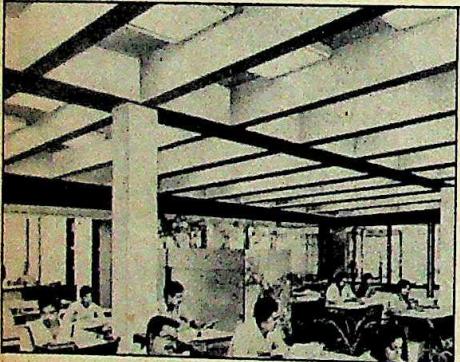
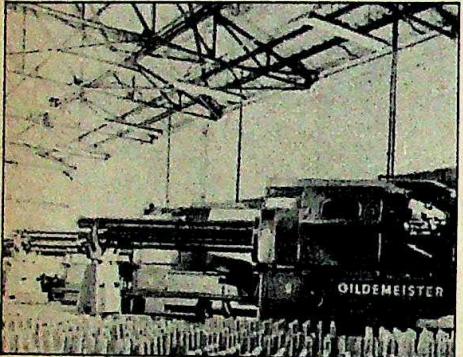
who happens to be Chairman Mahajan's nephew and was made chief purchase officer within three weeks of his uncle's appointment as chairman.

**Controversial Deals:** Some of the purchases investigated by the Finance and Vigilance Departments are:

► The purchase of conductors from two

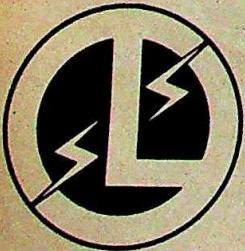
The chief minister views the implications of the reports with absolute gravity. Says he: "Some million cause procedures of the board have come to notice. I am looking into them personally and punitive action will be taken against those who are responsible for the bungling, irrespective of the persons involved." Most of the internal audit report—a routine annual exercise—deals with the years following Kailash Chand Mahajan's

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## TAMIL NADU

# Hangover

The distribution transformers, worth Rs 1 crore, supplied by an Uttar Pradesh firm in May 1982, the firm got the first order for Rs 83 lakh. Later about 30 transformers burnt out soon after installation; the alleged sabotage by employees in league with its competitors. The HPESB appointed a committee to investigate, but the firm was given additional orders worth Rs 7 lakh before the committee submitted its report. The purchase of 50,000 energy meters worth Rs 44.46 lakh from a Calcutta firm in this year. A dozen power engineers submitted a memorandum which said that deal had been finalised without waiting for the laboratory report which testifies to meters' soundness.

Something of this kind had happened earlier: in July 1981 HPESB invited tenders for 100 meters, although the Purchase Department had already processed the proposal to buy 60,000 meters from the public sector Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd. A Chandigarh firm received an order for 100 meters; the lowest tender, placed by Birla firm Electrical Construction & General Co., was ignored, reportedly on grounds of quality.

The decision to award part of the contract for the Sanjay Jal Vidyut Pariyojana—Rs 40 crore out of Rs 120 crore—to private contractors. This decision was despite the fact that the department was well capable of handling the work as an HPESB chief engineer said categorically in a confidential report.

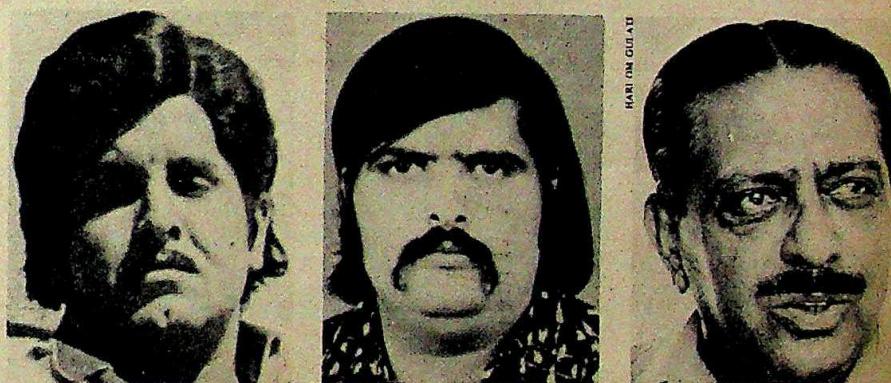
**Recruitment Charges:** Besides the commercial decisions mentioned in the audit report, HPESB has also attracted criticism because of the way in which sub-divisional officers and assistant engineers have been direct-recruited in Mahajan's tenure instead of following the junior engineers as was the case earlier. Interviews were held in Chandigarh and Pathankot; as the selection process got into gear only months before the assembly elections in May 1982, there were complaints that the appointments were not being handled on merit alone. After elections were made in February 1982, a serious fire destroyed Kennedy Cottage in Anna, where the recruitment records were kept. On March 6, 1982, the Vigilance Department is now collecting more evidence. The organisation's officials are refuting findings of the internal audit. While Mahajan was not available for comment, a HPESB official says: "No rules have been violated. Since it is an internal audit, we asked the various departments to reply to the objections." That routine, reflex reaction to satisfy Chief Minister Singh if he is ready to take up a new broom.

—PRABHU CHAWLA in Simla

representing Law Minister C. Ponaiyan who is alleged to have been an intermediary in the handing over of the commission payment to MGR. Also representing two other licensees were Y.S. Chitale and N.C. Raghavachari.

On July 27, the panel will meet again to continue the cross-examination of Sundaramurthy and decide whether MGR, his brother and nephews should be summoned before the Commission at all. The move has considerably annoyed Senior Advocate G. Ramaswamy, who is representing Manickam, Sundaramurthy and Ravindranath. Said he: "It is surprising that the Commission should think it necessary to hear arguments on whether MGR, Chakrapani and others have to be summoned to appear before it. It is the duty of a commission to examine all witnesses who can give evidence on matters related to its enquiry. This is supposed to be a fact-finding enquiry. It is very necessary that they should be brought before the Commission."

Ramaswamy is even more incensed by the Commission's refusal to allow public



(From left) Sukumaran, Balan and Manickam: serious charges

licences for the bottling and wholesale distribution of arrack. A major part of the Commission's enquiry has been instigated by Manickam's relatives who, denied the licence, began demanding their money back.

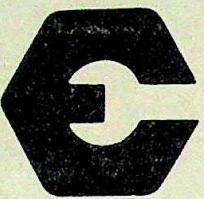
At the same time, seizing this as a godsend opportunity to tarnish the ruling party's image, the DMK has also thrown its entire political ammunition into the Commission. Important party members regularly sit through the Commission's proceedings hoping to see their fortunes rise as those of the AIADMK fall. But suddenly last fortnight, MGR stripped Revenue Minister S.D. Somasundaram of the excise portfolio, bringing it under his personal control.

**Investigation:** Meanwhile, the Commission completed 10 days of grilling cross-examinations before a formidable array of legal luminaries—Ram Jethmalani, appearing for MGR, Ashoke Sen for a wholesale arrack licensee, K.K. Venugopal

access to the official records connected with the case. "If we are allowed access to these records, we can relevantly cross-examine the accused with reference to the loopholes in the records," he said. "The Commission's holding on tight to the records encourages suspicions about the documents being skeletons in the cupboard."

**Hushed Proceedings:** The Commission, on its part, is maintaining a stony silence. Justice T. Ramaprasada Rao refuses to meet any journalist and has, in fact, instructed his staff not to interact with the press at all. Once, after an open public enquiry, the Commission even directed journalists covering its proceedings not to report certain details. Said Ramaswamy: "There is no provision in the Commissions of Enquiry Act empowering an enquiry commission to forbid reporting of certain parts of its proceedings when it is not an 'in camera' probe."

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Yet, despite its taciturnity, the commission cannot ignore the evidence of a number of issues that keep cropping up—the promissory notes, adding up to Rs 10.75 lakh which M.G. Chakrapani was forced to tender to Manickam when the liquor failed to be obtained; the New Bank India cheque for Rs 3 lakh issued earlier by Sankaran to Sundaramurthy and Ravindranath as part-repayment of the commission money and which later bounced. Moreover, there are internal inconsistencies in MGR's affidavit. The chief minister explicitly denies that any meeting took place at all in March 1981 between Sundaramurthy, Ravindranath and MGR's son and nephews, as alleged by Manickam. But, later, in the same affidavit, MGR also states that by March 1981, he had already announced in several Tamil newspapers that he had severed relations with his son Chakrapani and his family. In that the chief minister would hardly know if the meeting had actually been held between the two parties. That he is treading on very dangerous ground is clear and even if the enquiry commission does ultimately acquit him, this certainly one issue MGR will have difficulty wriggling out of.

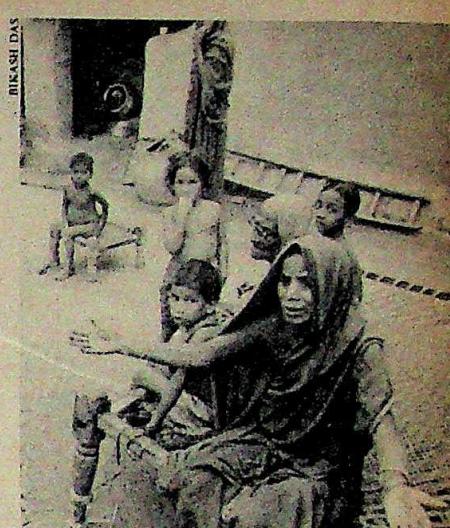
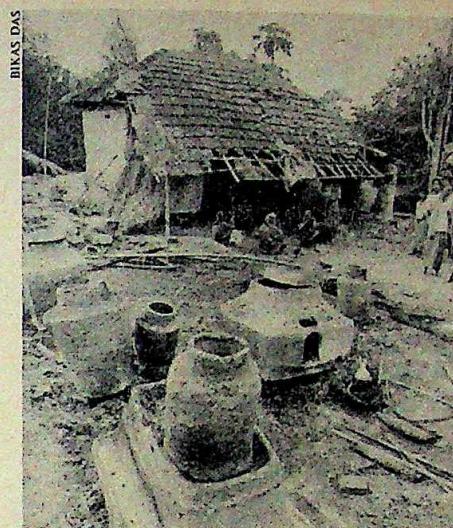
S.H. VENKATRAMANI

#### WEST BENGAL

## Malda Mayhem

IT WAS inevitable. After weeks of uneasy truce between West Bengal's two contending Goliaths—the ruling Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) and the Congress(I)—the guns at last ablaze. Last fortnight, armed supporters of Congress(I) supporters, in a pre-dawn swoop on three villages in Malda, some 100 km north of Calcutta, killed 13 CPI(M) supporters, burnt down over 100 huts and 150 injured. The carnage, lasting nearly four hours, was the shocking culmination of rising tension since the panchayat elections in May in which the Marxists won the largest number of seats and the Congress(I) the second.

The incident left the CPI(M) leadership, dazed. For some time in the past, Congress(I) had been playing a more or less passive role in the state. The change was brought about by the fact that though the Congress(I) was bested in the panchayat elections in the past. Said Saroj Mukherjee, chairman of the Left Front Committee and secretary of the CPI(M) state committee: "We urge the people to stand up against such



A ravaged hut at Malopara (left) and a bereaved family: political fallout

vandalism by the Congress(I)."

Malda district is the stronghold of the powerful Union Minister for Railways, A.B.A. Ghani Khan Choudhury, who was elected to the Lok Sabha from the Malda constituency in 1980 by a margin of over 1.5 lakh votes. In the panchayat elections, the CPI(M) lost to the Congress(I) in the zilla parishad, the highest body of the three-tier local self-government system. However, within Malda district, the Ratua sub-division, where the carnage took place, is supposed to be the only bastion of the CPI(M).

**Planned Slaughter:** The killings are reported to be the sequel to the murder of Mohammed Masud, a Youth Congress(I) worker. The incident was reminiscent of the Nellie massacre in Assam. As at Nellie, the villagers of Malopara, Govindapur Road and Tiktahar, woke up early in the morning to find their homes surrounded by armed people from neighbouring villages. The police arrived four hours later even though one person had managed to escape on a bicycle and inform the thana.

The Malopara Gram Panchayat had changed hands at the last election, rejecting the CPI(M) and going over to the Congress(I) and it looked as if Congress(I) supporters had decided to teach their political rivals a further lesson as they began to set huts on fire and closed in on the scared villagers. At least eight of the 13 killed were hacked with choppers and the rest were felled by bullets.

The main target appeared to be Abdul Bari, a prominent Marxist leader of the district and a member of the zilla parishad. Bari was away but his two sons and uncle were killed. Initial reports said his 15-year-old daughter Amina had been kidnapped but she was traced later, having taken shelter with a relative. Said Abdul Malik, a Malopara resident: "The way the attackers

easily identified the huts of CPI(M) supporters made it clear that the raid was well planned."

**Tragic Delay:** The police arrived on the scene when the bloodbath was nearly over. The district police issued a statement the next day saying that the police party had been "misled" to another place. Significantly, the Congress(I) is known to have sizeable penetration in the district police administration many of whose officials down the line were handpicked by Choudhury himself when he was the West Bengal minister for Power and Irrigation between 1972 and 1977. It took the state administration 24 hours to arrange for police reinforcements including contingents from the paramilitary Eastern Frontier Rifles.

While a police investigation was on, Mukherjee convened a press conference to accuse Choudhury. He said: "We are in the possession of documents to establish that Choudhury's provocative speeches at the time of the panchayat elections led to the building up of tension in that area." Mukherjee added that Choudhury's speeches were designed to "create a climate of violence". However, these speeches were delivered eight weeks before the incident. Even as the villagers alleged that their attackers belonged to the Congress(I), party leaders in Calcutta maintained that their supporters had no hand in it. Motahar Hossein, a general secretary of the West Bengal Congress(I), described the accusation against Choudhury as "baseless" and urged the state Government to institute a "proper enquiry" so that the "real culprits" were brought to book. Ironically, Congress(I) leaders had met Governor B.N. Pandey a few days earlier to complain of lawlessness. Now their own party is in the dock for the worst violence in several months.

SUMANTA SEN

GUJARAT

# Flood Of Sorrow

LAST month, large parts of the Saurashtra region of Gujarat were ravaged by floods, following four days of incessant rain. Between June 19 and 23, the area received twice the average annual rainfall. The deluge left 600 dead and nearly 50 missing. More than 60,000 head of cattle were washed away and about 1,20,000 houses destroyed. Over 2 million people in an area of about 10,000 sq km were affected. INDIA TODAY Correspondent RAMESH MENON spent five days travelling through the affected districts. His report:

I DO NOT feel like living here anymore.... The water took away everything," said Sharda Savsani of Shapur village, expressing the shock and desperation of the hundreds of thousands who last month saw their homes and houses, their livestock and belongings, all swept away before their eyes by a spate of water.

Ironically, it had been a dry season till then, and the villagers were beginning to fret as the time for sowing the winter crop approached, and the fertility of the soil remained unrenewed by the annual rains. Then, on June 19, they danced with joy as the dark clouds gathered and it began to rain.

But by the fateful midsummer's night, their dream had become a nightmare. After two days, during which sheets of water—gusted by winds of up to 115 kmph—lashed the area with cyclonic fury, 27 minor dams in Junagadh district were overflowing, some by over 7ft. The panic-stricken administration, afraid that the water would breach the dams, had to open the floodgates. And the fury of the streams swept across the countryside in an appalling tide of destruction. In addition, the rivers Ojat, Bhadar and Madhuwati overflowed their banks, inundating an area nearly 400 km wide.

**Cut Off:** As a result, the entire communication network went to pieces. Roads and rail lines were breached, telephone lines down, and at the peak of the disaster, even wireless communication broke down. According to estimates, about 50 highways were damaged. Of the Vanthali-Veraval road, 8 km were washed away.

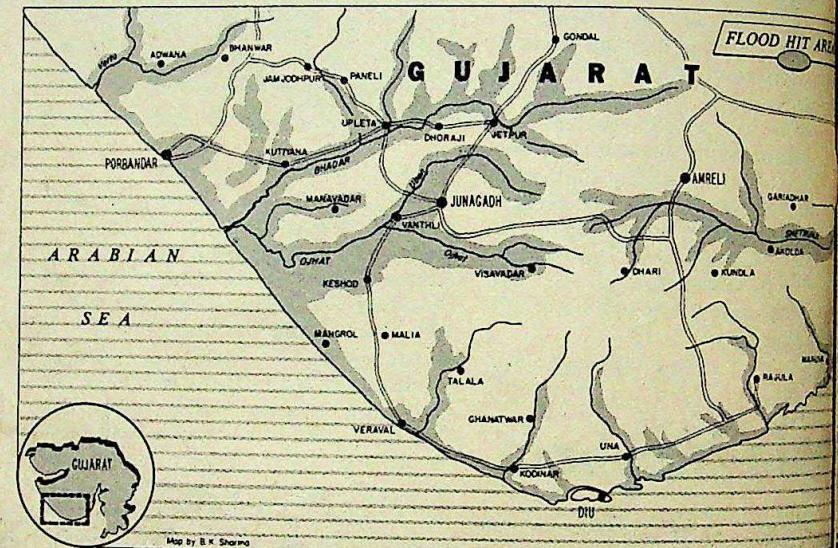
Villagers in remote areas sat precariously perched on rooftops and trees awaiting relief, which in the first few days was virtually non-existent. After days of hunger and fear, they clawed at one another for a share of the bags of grain and the food packets that were air-dropped. Said a visibly moved Wing Commander Satish Jain: "It is pitiable to see hungry villagers virtually beg for food as we drop packets and fly off. The calamity is so

enormous that we will not be able to do enough."

In Sarkhai village in Junagadh, air force helicopters brought bags of wheat flour six days after the village was cut off. As the helicopters took off, a horde of villagers rushed to grab the flour. In the ensuing mêlée, the bags were torn and half the food lost as the desperate villagers rushed to their half-destroyed huts with meagre handfuls.

Desperation was everywhere. Sutar of Shapur village had starved for days. Dizzy with hunger, and the person driven to eat a dead cat. Later, dazed by his act, he said: "I cannot explain sick I feel after eating it."

**Corruption:** While half the relief supplies broke before they could reach their destinations—the packing was too thin—the food meant for the flood victims fell to the avarice of callous officials—including the police. At Porbandar airport, while tired air force pilots ate after a number of sorties, two gunny bags of flour waiting



VITAY R. SRINIVAS



A railway line breached near Vanthali: communication disrupted

handed onto a helicopter were stealthily whisked away in a rickshaw under the supervision of an S.R.P. jawan, posted there to guard the food. Labourers who were loading the food said that some policemen had directed them to keep about 3 tonnes aside for them. The official in charge of loading the relief supplies claimed the bags were for affected labourers. But when labourers stated that they had got none of it, and that it was being taken by constables, he changed his story, saying the mamlatdar had asked for three bags. Asked to produce the mamlatdar's order, he confessed that though he had tried to stop the irregularities, he couldn't

argue with powerful senior officials. Subsequently, one of the bags was retrieved. Pilots alleged that these irregularities were taking place every day.

Brutal insensitivity was also manifest in the plunder of houses, particularly those near urban centres. Girish Bhatt, a volunteer supervising relief and cleaning at Shapur, pointed out that "locks of many houses were broken and the waters cannot do that".

**T**HE FLOODS once again revealed the inability of the Government to handle crises. Even two days after the calamity, the Government machinery remained

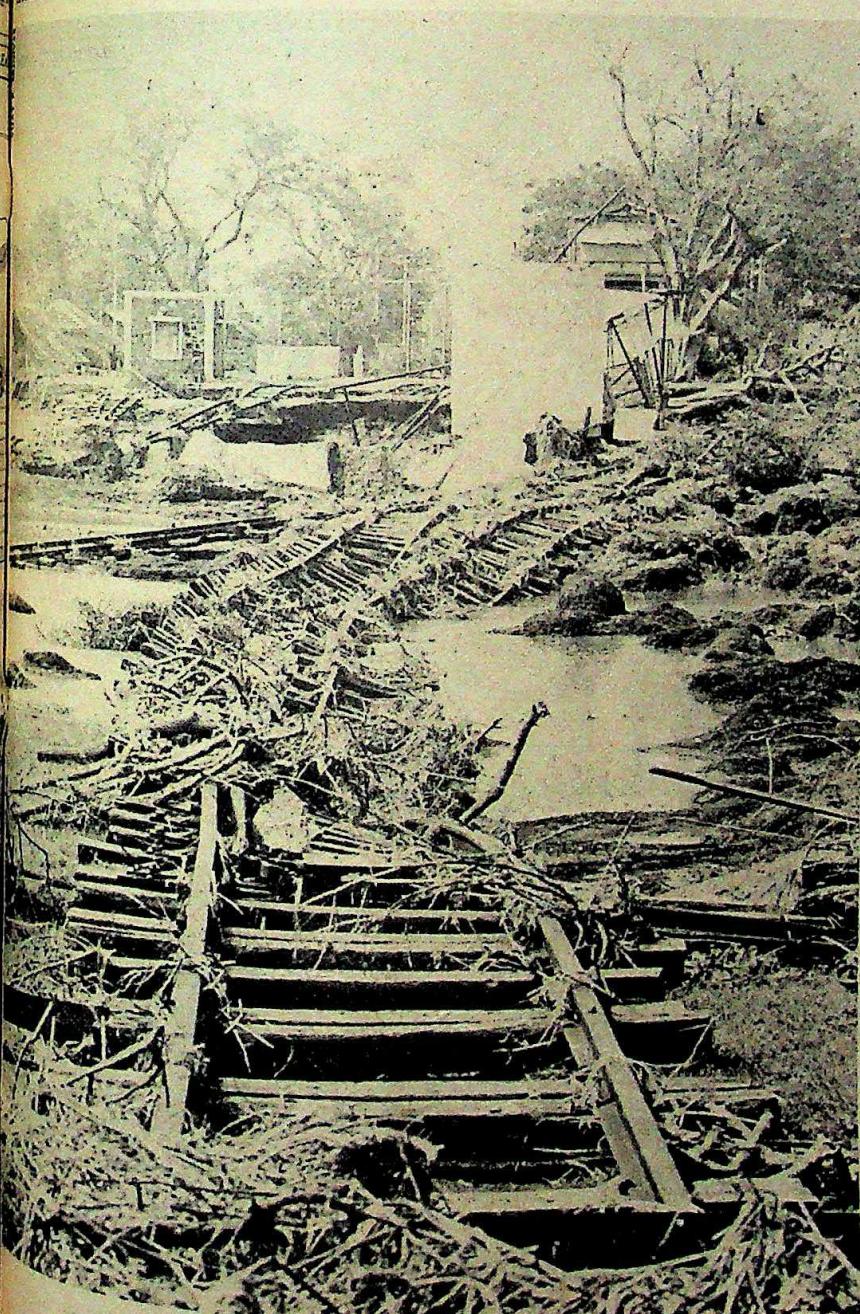
paralysed; officials knew nothing of the plight of Shapur—only 8 km from the district headquarters at Junagadh, though the water level was 11 ft in the devastated village. Maghpur, a village about 25 km from Junagadh, received help on the evening of June 26, five days after the disaster. Lamented Chagan Keshav, a young labourer from Shapur: "No one cares for us. It took four days for the Government to rush food packets for us. We lost all we had."

On June 24, while the marooned villagers of Shapur and Vanthali clung desperately to life and hope, the entire bureaucracy of district Junagadh was busy preparing to receive Chief Minister Madhavsinh Solanki and other ministers at the Circuit House. Admitted a senior official: "There was no one here to take decisions. Everyone was passing the buck as the Collector, P.V. Vyas, was stuck at Porbandar for five days." But Vyas's absence can hardly excuse the chary relief operations, for a number of ministers, including Solanki, Mahant Vijaydasji and Devjibhai Vanvi, and many senior bureaucrats, were present at Junagadh.

The anger of the people was manifest when Solanki visited Vanthali, where over a hundred are estimated dead. Solanki was abused and manhandled. Though it was one of the most seriously affected spots, he did not visit it again. Nor did Mrs Gandhi; the village was kept out of her schedule. During her tour, the prime minister learnt first-hand of the inadequacy of relief measures. In Porbandar, 200 women demonstrated before her. One of them made bold to tell her that she was not being taken to the worst affected areas. Later she was witness to a group of fishermen shouting slogans.

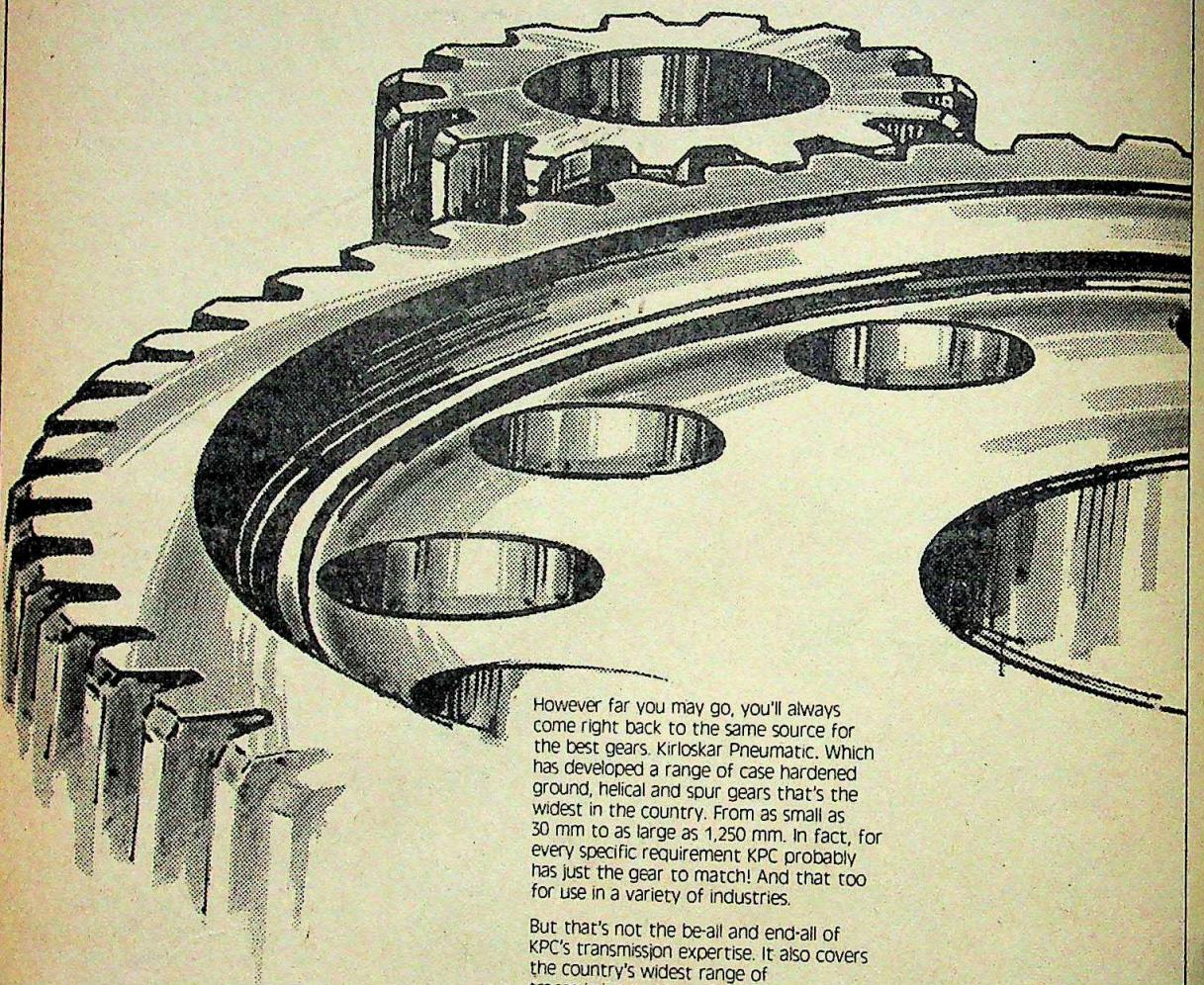
**Anger:** Even 10 days after the deluge, Porbandar remained inundated. Only then were pumps installed to help reduce the level which in some residential areas was over 5 ft. Residents are understandably furious at the Government's inaction and the rampant corruption. Alleged Congress(I) Municipal Councillor Vikramsinh Jadeja: "Racketeering in cash doles is rampant. The deserving ones are hardly getting it. Even after six days of the flood there is an acute shortage of fuel and foodgrains. Over 2,000 cattle have been heaped up by the citizens by the seaside. Our repeated requests for diesel and firewood to cremate them have fallen on deaf ears. The putrefying carcasses will spread disease and then the Government may wake up."

One task that the Government did take up in a big way was the suppression of facts. Even on June 21, Home Minister Prabodh Raval maintained that the situation was not alarming. Later, as the state police headquarters was passing on the latest information to the press, Raval instructed them not to, and started giving press briefings



Shapur village near Junagadh: devastated

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Predictably, the fast-rising toll slowly slowed, and soon there were no deaths—officially. Meanwhile, villagers fear that hundreds more have either been buried in the slush or flowed downstream. Official estimates of the death toll are over 1,000 and of the missing over 1,500.

One area conspicuous for the Government's efficiency in handling the crisis was seen in Rajkot district. Collector Vinod Patel and District Development Officer K. S. Takru mobilised 500-odd tractors from the district to carry relief supplies and clean up the town, which was entirely inundated. Six medical teams worked tirelessly to prevent epidemics. Within a week, the 29 roads which had been disrupted were restored.

**Disgruntled Army:** But this was the exception. The situation in general was out of control and did not improve till the army and air force were called in. The air force made nearly a dozen sorties daily, and the rescued people by boats. But two days after they began operations, army officers at a press conference of the Government complained there were hardly any orders. Said one: "The situation is aggravating as thousands of hungry villagers are clinging to remote areas. With our kind of infrastructure and experience, we could build roads and bridges within a matter of a few days, but surprisingly the state Government does not seem eager to let us do it."

Added an angry Major O.P. Gupta, task force commander: "If our services were called for two days earlier, we could have saved thousands of lives. Even after they called us in, there were hardly any orders for concrete rescue operations."

Even government officials admitted that the lessons of the Morvi disaster and the recent cyclone have not been learnt. Except for the central hilly region, Saurashtra's highly populated areas are low-lying and vulnerable to cyclones, tidal waves and floods. A recent study by Shirish Avrani of the School of Planning at Ahmedabad underlines the inadequacy of disaster warning systems and recommends construction of shelters and direct relay warning from satellites.

Said Dr Binod Aggarwal of the Space Applications Centre: "A satellite-based communication system is the only way out as the disaster warnings at present have to follow a conventional pattern of going through various agencies and when the villagers are told about it, it is already too late."

The state Government has urged Mrs Gandhi to ask the Central Water Commission to guide it in strengthening dams. Last fortnight, dams were being lined with sandbags as rain threatened to fill them once again. Meanwhile, life limped on in the villages, as the affected men and women recovered from the shock, and farmers could be seen in the once-green fields, ploughing from dawn to dusk for the winter season.



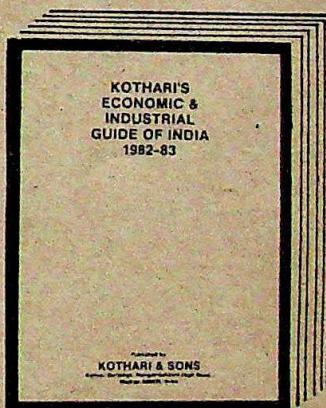
Villagers rush to a helicopter bringing food packets: inadequate supplies

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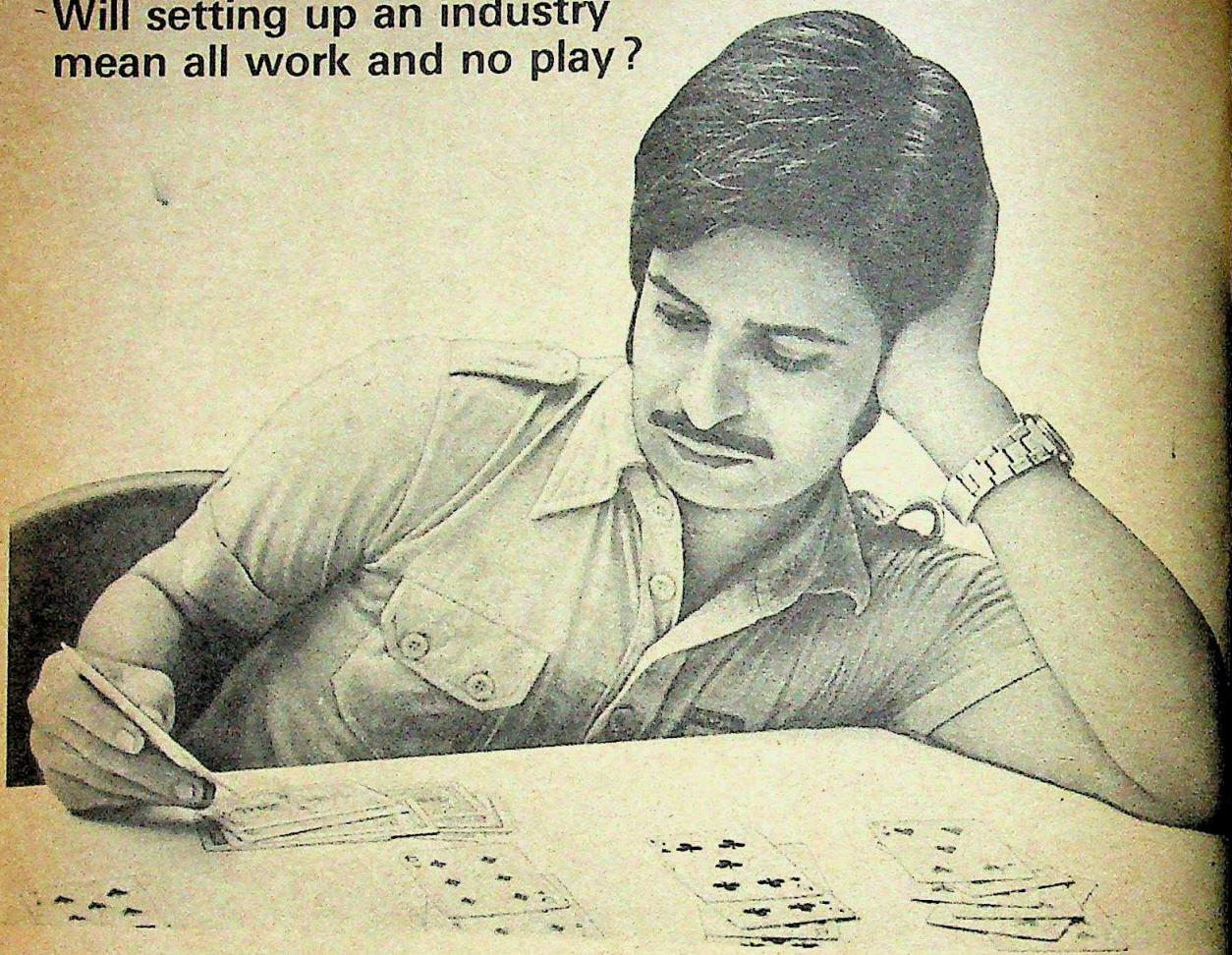
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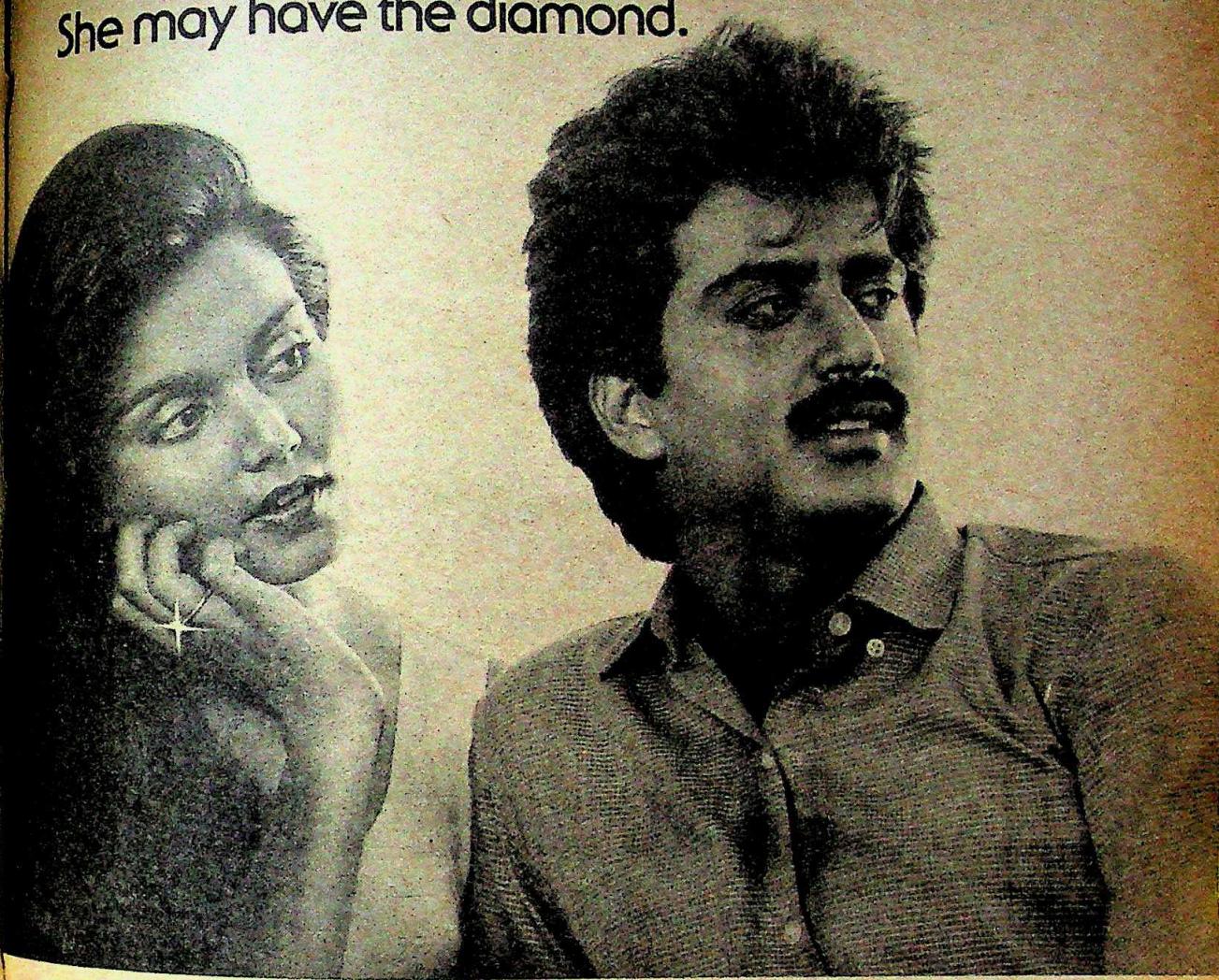


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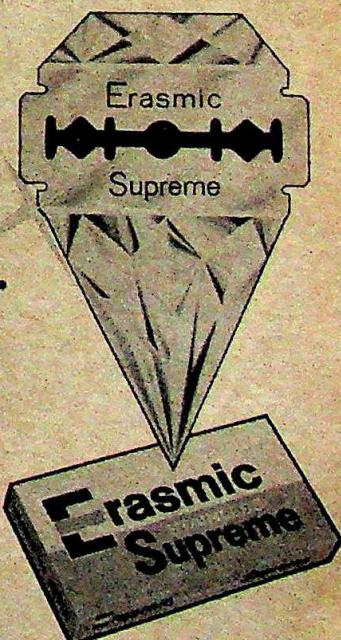


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## SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES

# The Hidden Menace

**A** 30-YEAR-OLD Calcutta housewife commits suicide; a middle-aged Chandigarh businessman faces social ostracism and a divorce suit filed by his wife, and in Patna a male servant rapes two girls aged three and five. All three incidents have one common denominator—VD, the two letters that are rapidly becoming the most dreaded in the Indian medical lexicon. In a little less than a decade, venereal disease, better known by its stigmatic acronym, VD, has emerged as the third most dangerous affliction in the country after malaria and tuberculosis.

Statistics only paint a minuscule part of the grim picture. In 1971, the national estimate of people affected by VD was a highly conservative 2 lakh. A decade later, in 1981—the latest for which statistics are available—the national figure had soared to 7.75 lakh, an increase of almost 400 per cent. But even that, incredibly, is only a fraction of the actual number of cases. Impelled by ignorance and social attitudes, VD has acquired a leper-like stigma that results in only a fraction of VD cases being reported. Dharam Pal, 56, adviser to the Government of India on venereal diseases concurs: "Only 5 per cent of the patients go to government hospitals for treatment and are documented. The other 95 per cent go to private doctors or remain untreated. Statistics only tell us the trend but not the magnitude."

**Concealed Danger:** But judging by the trend of the last decade, which witnessed a four-fold increase, VD is the hidden menace that is stealthily acquiring apocalyptic proportions. Conservative estimates by the World Health Organisation (WHO) indicated that in 1973 some 20 million Indians had VD, or the less sinister sounding STD (sexually transmitted diseases), the new acronym coined by WHO. A conference of venereologists held at Kottayam last year was told the number was in fact larger, some 40 million. Either way, that affords STD the dubious dis-

tinction of being one of the most dreaded diseases in the country.

Even more alarming is the dangerous ignorance that STD has spawned. The Calcutta housewife committed suicide after she had contracted gonorrhoea and was incapable of living with the guilt. The Patna servant raped the two children because he believed, as many others do in India, that by having sexual relations with a virgin, he would be cured. The Chandigarh businessman caught syphilis on a business trip to Hong Kong and is now a social leper facing divorce proceedings.

How hidden is the menace is illustrated by the fact that only now have studies and research on STD begun and already some

shocking revelations have emerged:

► In Tamil Nadu, a survey carried out earlier this year revealed that one out of every five males surveyed suffered from STD.

► Genital herpes, the venereal disease that is now pillaging the West, has assumed epidemic proportions in India compared to a decade ago when the disease was nonexistent.

► Maharashtra accounts for over 50 per cent of the STD cases reported by government clinics (4.40 lakh) with Bombay's notorious red-light areas being the logical reason that city's distinction as the STD centre of the country. On any given day the affected population of Bombay is an estimated 36,000.

► The Union Territory of Pondicherry has been found to have one of the highest STD incidence rates in the country with one out of every 33 persons suffering from one form of STD or another.

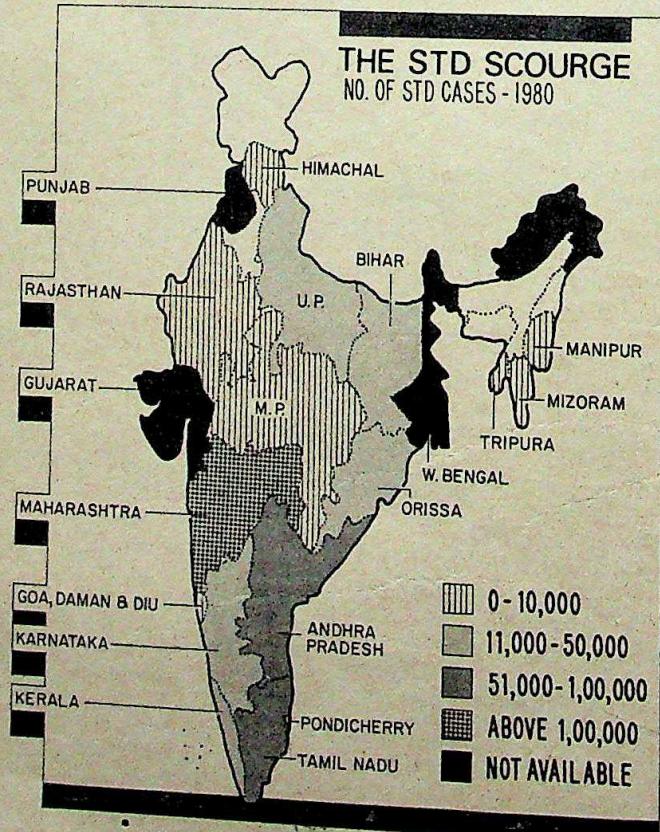
► In Bihar, 25 per cent of the cases reported were children below the age of 15.

The litany gets more pressing but the above facts are enough to indicate that not only has the disease become a mounting medical threat but it also respects no geographical boundaries (see map). Walter Kant, former additional director of health services in Bihar, says: "Of all the scourges which have affected mankind, few have caused more damage to the health and efficiency of a nation than STD."

**Alarming Trends:** As the warning goes largely unheeded, new trends are emerging in the pattern of sexually transmitted diseases. Syphilis, the most serious STD is caused by a corkscrew-shaped organism and accounts for almost 10 per cent of the cases. A quarter of the victims are afflicted with chancroid which are painless ulcers appearing on the genitalia. The bean-shaped organism causing gonorrhoea takes toll of 15 per cent of the cases reported.

In Trivandrum, Dr. B.K. Nair, dermatologist B.K. Nair, reports that gonorrhoea has overtaken syphilis and is now the

*In a little less than a decade VD has emerged as the third most dangerous affliction in the country after malaria and tuberculosis.*



Map by K. Shoma

erent STD in coastal Kerala. In Hyderabad, the Gandhi Hospital reported that the relative decline in syphilitic cases in the past two years was matched by genital herpes among. Explains specialist J. Chandrayudhan: "With the increasing use of antibiotics in curing several illnesses, the resistance to STD also develops and this is why herpes, for which there is no drug cure, is creeping up on the list of common sexually transmitted diseases."

Venereologists are also watching with increasing concern the rising trend of STD among India's youth, reflecting the new permissiveness gripping the country. In Bombay, dermatologist Chandrakant K. Jagavkar found that the majority of the STD victims were in the age group of 15 to 30 years. Jagavkar: "What we find particularly alarming today is the apparent increase of disease in younger age groups and even teenagers."

The danger is real. In Delhi, the Central

Health Education Bureau (CHEB) did a pilot study in a government hospital two years ago and found that an overwhelming majority of the victims were youths, two-thirds of them unmarried. The findings were further confirmed by a study of 2,000 STD victims in Madras done by psychologist Savithri Subramaniam last year. To her surprise, Subramaniam found that as many as three-quarters of the males and almost half the females surveyed were between 21 and 30 years and STD was higher among teenage girls than the boys. And more than half of the people surveyed were unmarried. Observes Subramaniam: "Pre-marital sex is increasingly becoming an accepted way of behaviour."

In Lucknow, venereologist Vijai Narayan, who studied patients in the King George Medical College, has come out with an even more revealing profile of the victims. While the average age of the group surveyed was 27.6 years, most of them admitted to

having had their first sexual experience at 18. Two-thirds of the married persons said they indulged in extramarital sex.

Such findings confirm what sociologists have long suspected, that a silent sexual revolution is sweeping the country's urban population. Psychologists and venereologists are reluctant to draw too many conclusions, for accurate information is hard to come by, but it is clear that sex as a practice and a subject of discussion has emerged from the sanctity of the marital bedroom. Said Narayan: "Widespread promiscuity has resulted in the spread of the sources of infection in the community whose identification is difficult to establish."

Rapid urbanisation, the break-up of the traditional family, more divorce, loneliness and frustration—the hallmark of a society in rapid transition—all lie behind the rising promiscuity. What venereologists find is the most vulnerable age group between the ages of 19 and 29 has mushroomed from 86 mil-

*While the wealthy can remain anonymous by visiting private specialists, the poor, obliged to sit in long lines at government hospitals, are more usually studied.*



lion in 1971 to 121 million in the 1981 census.

**Modern Strains:** As urban pressures have grown, so have slums—and they have fast become ideal breeding grounds for STD. In Patna dermatologist Avinash Kumar found that as high as 90 per cent of the infected people had only one room to live in. Narayan's study in Lucknow showed that while the average family size of the victims was six members, the average living accommodation was only two rooms per family. Said Narayan: "The existence of overcrowding, upheavals in moral values, diminishing fear of pregnancy, spurt of sexually stimulating literature and films, lack of recreational facilities and unstable family life seemed to have contributed significantly to the rise of venereal diseases."

The diseases seem to have been a great leveller too since their victims belong to every class of society. While the wealthy can remain anonymous by visiting private specialists, the poor are obliged to sit in long lines at government hospitals and hence are more easily studied. In the Delhi study a majority of the STD patients earned between Rs 200 and Rs 600 a month and among the victims were policemen, truck-drivers, students, unskilled workers and clerks. In Bihar the majority of the sufferers were petty traders, peons, rickshaw-pullers and drivers. In Lucknow as many as 60 per cent of the patients surveyed were students. But in Madras, when Subramaniam checked with private practitioners, she found that the majority earned Rs 1,800 and above a month and were top government officials, businessmen, professionals and politicians.

**T**HE DANGERS from the increasing sexual permissiveness don't just end in hospitals. Warns S.G. Kabra of the R.N.T. Medical College, Udaipur: "In India where monogamy is the rule and extra-marital relations attract social stigma, the increase (in STD) reflects progressive promiscuity and medically unsupervised prostitution." In fact all studies done so far indicate that the major source of infection has been prostitutes. A 25-year-old salesman in Madras who is a frequent visitor to brothels explains: "In India you are expected to abstain from sex till you are married and for men it is often till 30. It's impossible for me to restrain my sexual urges till that time. I will go mad and since I feel guilty having sex with girls my age it is easier to let out my frustration in a whorehouse."

As a result, prostitution has increased alarmingly in most states. In Calcutta, which is widely regarded as India's "sex city" mainly because prostitutes are easily available, dermatologist T. Fernandes points out that the "pattern of prostitution is chang-

ing". While brothels still flourish, the girl racket has reached a new peak. Most of these are employed in various professions that do not pay them enough and are willing to sell their bodies to make both ends meet. The same trend is reported even in the normally staid Bangalore. Says dermatologist K.M. Prakash: "A new phenomenon in the city is that married women from the middle and higher class societies have become call-girls as a part-time employment to earn more income."

**Prostitution Spurt:** Bombay continues to be the nerve-centre of prostitution and the Kamatipura-Falkland Road area itself houses an estimated 10,000 prostitutes. In Bihar, while the traditional red-light zones

poses multiple health hazards. While psychologists fear that experiences with prostitutes can seriously damage male sexuality, leading in many cases to impotency and necrosis, venereologists also reiterate that brothels are cesspools of untreated STD. In India the danger is far greater because none of the prostitutes come for scientific medical check-ups although, as Bangalore dermatologist John Marshall points out: "They are an immeasurable reservoir of infection."

In Bombay the Indian Health Organisation (IHO) formed by doctors to curb the prevalence of STD among prostitutes held a health camp last year in the Kamatipura area and found that 90 per cent of the prostitutes who attended suffered from venereal disease.

### *Widespread promiscuity has resulted in the spread of the sources of infection in the community whose identification is difficult to establish.*



like Chapra, Muzaffarpur, Gaya, Bettiah and Monghyr continue to thrive—although prostitution now goes under the new name of gaikas (singers or entertainers)—several new brothels were reportedly operating in ashrams in Arrah, Bihia and Arwal, areas which were clean before. In Kerala the increased migration of people to the Gulf countries has led to sexual frustration and when they return they tend to try and make up for time lost. Says venereologist Nair: "A Gulf-returned man spends thousands on whores, and the sophisticated brothels that have suddenly sprung up are the breeding grounds of STD."

The rise in prostitution in the country

ses. In most of these cases the clinical symptoms were obvious indicating the lack of medical treatment. Similar camps in Pune and Worli confirmed these findings. Says Dr. Ishwaraprasad Gilada: "Most of them are quacks who operate 'clinics' in red-light areas. These quacks have a vested interest in their continuing ill health so there is no attempt made to cure them." The IHO team was shocked to learn that the quacks had given prostitutes intra-vaginal injections which were unheard of as a scientific treatment for STD.

Prostitution results in what venereologists call "ping-pong" infection, that is, people who catch the disease pass it on to others before they go for treatment. A ma-

problem in India is that unlike most western countries, there is no 'contact tracing'. In developed countries strict laws have been enacted making it compulsory for people suffering from STD to seek immediate treatment and also to reveal the source of infection. Unfortunately, in India, because of the stigma attached to the disease, the patients are unwilling to reveal the source of infection. In many cases they refuse to bring their wives or husbands for fear that their infidelity may be known. In Calcutta a specialist reported the case of a housewife who flew into rage when he asked to bring her husband for a check-up when he found she had STD.

**Prevalent Myths:** More than just the stigma is the alarming and widespread ignorance about STD and its harmful effects, even among the educated class. In the CHEB study in Delhi, some victims asked to explain how they contracted the disease, genuinely believed it was because they shared food with or had sex during a woman's menstrual period. In Madras, Subramaniam was astounded when a male patient told her that he found sores on his genitals after he had eaten hot Indian curry the previous evening. Closer questioning revealed that he did have sexual intercourse with a prostitute several days after his spiced dinner but that he did not make the obvious connection. Exclaimed Subramaniam: "I am shocked by the ignorance and misconceptions people have about STD in the country."

Subramaniam would have been even more horrified if she had heard about the most common myth many Indian males harbour about the cure for STD: having sex with a virgin. In Patna, Q.N. Begum, president, Association for Social Hygiene in India (ASHI), Bihar branch, narrates the grisly story of two girls aged three and five being raped by a male servant suffering from syphilis who believed he could thereby get rid of the disease. Both the girls had to be treated by ASHI for syphilis. In Hyderabad, skin specialist J.W. Aurangabadkar reports: "In a year I attend to at least four girls, hardly four or five years old who are victims."

The fruits of ignorance are sadly predictable: the disease goes undetected and treatment is often delayed. Simple cases become complicated ones. Sample surveys made by venereologists in several hospitals reveal that persons come to the hospital only after they have had the disease for two weeks, and in some cases even as long as a year. In many cases treatment comes too late. In Bangalore, dermatologist Prakash reports the case of a 28-year-old factory worker who came to him after the tertiary stage of syphilis had set in. After prolonged treatment, spanning a year, the worker was finally cured and got married recently. But others are not so lucky. In Kerala, a

*In fact, all studies done so far indicate that the major source of infection has been prostitutes.*



Gulf-return construction worker suffering from gonorrhoea neglected initially to treat it. As a result, treatment later proved ineffective and doctors told him that he had "to live with gonorrhoea". Drop-out rates for treatment are high and Calcutta hospitals report that as many as 50 per cent of the patients stop treatment even before they are cured.

**D**ESPITE the fact that STD is rapidly becoming the number one disease ravaging the country, the Central and state governments continue to show a lackadaisical attitude to the problem. Hardly 5 per cent of the cases visit government hospitals with their badly equipped STD clinics. Most of the victims visit private practi-

tions although all the 18 STD's are notifiable diseases under law and should be reported to the state health departments. No attempt is made to plug the gap. A typical example of the state governments' apathy to the problem is that many of the treatment centres are still called VD clinics.

In the midst of all this, it is clear that the Government could do much more. Even to this day there is no separate health staff or secretariat to deal with STD either in the Centre or in most state governments. The Centre has only an STD adviser who is handicapped by the fact that none of the states files the STD figures on time and some states like Punjab, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh and Gujarat do not bother to send them at all.

At first the Central Government decided to establish STD clinics in district headquarters and some 237 sprang up in the last 25 years. But these clinics hardly cover a third of the total districts in the country and are usually located in towns and factory areas, neglecting the rural population completely. In Uttar Pradesh, for instance, there are 23 STD clinics for the state's 56 districts. Most of these have untrained staff and are badly equipped. So much so that the state Health Directorate pointed out recently, "There is no agency to do effective supervision and survey of the incidence of STD."

**Inadequate Interest:** Nor is the subject a particularly popular one among medical students. Venereology has long remained a Cin-

#### THE DISEASES

## Facts Of Life

**I**T IS paradoxical that despite effective medical treatment available to treat sexually transmitted diseases (STD) in the country the number of cases reported instead of falling has been rising dramatically. Venereologists point out that most of the STD cases are easily curable if treatment is administered early.

**Syphilis**, for instance, which accounts for an estimated 38 per cent of STD cases in the country can be cured if detected immediately with a course of injections containing procaine penicillin in oil with aluminium monostearate or PAM as it is more popularly called. Caused by a spiral organism called *theponema pallidum*, syphilis is a highly contagious disease passed on mainly during coitus but can also be transmitted while kissing if there are infected lesions in the mouth.

The incubation period before the onset of the disease varies from 10 days to four months, the average being three weeks and the first symptom is a hard swelling lesion called chancre in the genitals. If left untreated the chancre disappears and after four to 12 weeks a rash usually breaks out over the body and possibly lesions on the lips, tongue and palate. If untreated, syphilis can lead to blindness, mental illness and heart complications. Women can pass on syphilis to their babies causing as much damage to the children as in adults. Syphilis can be detected by a simple blood test and if treated early it can be cured completely. In later stages treatment will arrest the spread of infection but cannot undo the damage done to the heart or nervous system.

**Chancroid** or soft sores is now second to only syphilis in its prevalence in India accounting for an estimated 23 per cent cases. Chancroid usually appears as a ragged tender ulcer on the genitals and several of them could appear at the same time. It is easily treated with a course of sulphonamides or tetracycline tablets but if neglected could lead to a chronic ulcer in the groin.

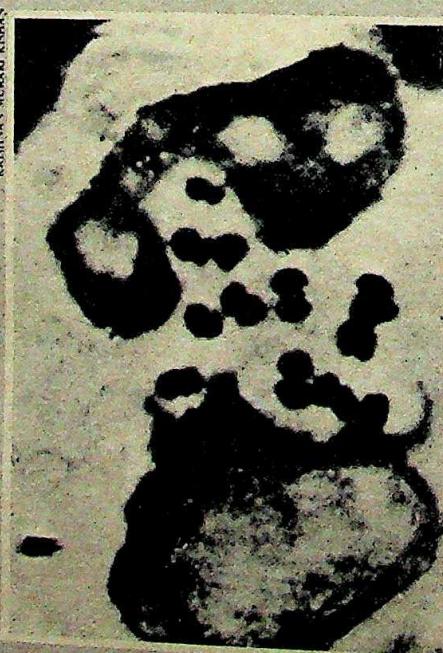
**Gonorrhoea** has, according to official figures, dropped in the last few years. But it is still widely prevalent and accounts for 19 per cent of STD cases. Caused by a bean-shaped organism, gonorrhoea in men usually manifests itself with pain while urinating or more frequently urethral discharge which is purulent and often severe in the morning.

Women usually experience vaginal discharge and an inflamed bladder but gonorrhoea can be symptomless. The disease is detected by taking a culture of the urine and can be cured with a prescribed dosage of penicillin or sulphonamides but more recently resistant strains of gonorrhoea have cropped up which are worrying doctors. If left untreated gonorrhoea can lead to a host of diseases: sterility, arthritis, brain fever, pharyngitis, impure blood and heart complications.

**Lymphogranuloma venereum (LGV)** and **granuloma inguinale (GI)** are the two other most common forms of STD accounting for an estimated 8 per cent of the cases in the country. Found mostly in south India GI is a mildly chronic, progressive and contagious venereal disease

involving the skin of the external genitalia and producing beefy red lesions. In LGV the primary lesion is an evanescent painless ulcer on the genitalia. Both these diseases can be treated with a course of tetracycline tablets or sulphonamides but if neglected in rare cases could lead to elephantiasis urethral, rectal or vaginal stricture.

**Herpes** is the newest threat to hit India. Doctors are watching with concern as they receive an increasing number of reports of genital herpes. Herpes is a viral infection that leads to lesions on the genitalia and to date no effective therapy has been discovered although experiments in Europe have made some progress. Venereologists in the country advocate a stitch in time policy for treatment of STD and advise victims to come for check-up if they suspect they have the disease. The Central Government is now planning to make antenatal check-ups for STD compulsory in all maternity homes and also tests for couples before they are married.



The organism that causes gonorrhoea

...of dermatology. Only in recent years have several universities introduced a post-graduate degree and diploma in venereology. There are hardly a hundred doctors in the country who hold such qualifications. Most STD departments are clubbed along with dermatology and as venereologist Kantharaj says: "We are treated as second class citizens." As a result proper treatment clubbed with education to reassure the patients is missing in most districts.

The concomitant danger has been a proliferation of quacks who, if anything, aggravate the situation with unscientific and inadequate medical treatment. Venereologists estimate that a whopping 74 per cent of the patients go to quacks for treatment. In Bangalore, a company executive is suffering from incurable case of genital warts despite having his penis circumcised after the disease affected his foreskin, mainly because for the first two years he was being treated by a quack who administered ineffective treatment.

India's social mores prevent the specialists with another major problem in controlling STDs: women as a rule do not seek treatment to hospitals when they contract the disease. Though women victims show fewer symptoms and suffer less discomfort, their reticence is largely due to inhibition and shame, and the plain fact that clinics are staffed mainly by men.

In Tamil Nadu, for instance, out of the 10,000 degree and diploma holders who graduated from the Institute of Venereology in Madras annually, hardly a dozen are women. Kantharaj reports that many women decline treatment by him when they come for treatment and he has to ask a female nurse to examine them. As eminent venereologist S. Rangiah puts it: "Women ill with STD mostly attend the male-biased, male predominating, masculine clinics, dispensaries, nursing homes or hospitals for relief."

**Poor Funding:** This apathy is not only hurting the nation a phenomenal amount of money but is also threatening its mental and social health. The Union Government has allocated Rs 90 lakh on STD programme. To date there has been no all-India survey done by it to determine how many people are affected and how much it is affecting the nation.

Last year venereologists at the Madurai Medical College interviewed at random 120

patients and found that the cost for treatment of each, including hospital expenses, averaged Rs 70. They calculate that for the estimated 30 to 40 million patients every year the country spends more than Rs 100 crore or more than the total Union health budget. Not only do they say that this figure is a "gross underestimate", they also add: "Indirectly the damage to the country's economy

IHO has sent its findings to the Maharashtra Government but it has not yet batted an eyelid.

**Partial Estimates:** Statistics again fail to provide a reasonable estimate of the physical damage caused by STD. Although it is well known that tertiary stages of syphilis can lead to madness and heart attacks, and gonorrhoea if untreated could cause sterility and arthritis, no comprehensive study has been made to assess the magnitude of the damage in the country. The Central Health Intelligence Bureau estimates that in males, 17 to 30 per cent of the cases of gonorrhoea develop infection of the sperm duct leading to sterility. In women, 9 to 20 per cent of the infected women develop the dangerous pelvic inflammation disease which eventually leads to infertility.

Congenital STD which could lead to blindness, physical deformities and even death among children has shown a marked increase. Sample surveys reveal that children below 10 years account for an astonishing 10 per cent of the total STD cases reported in the country. In Bihar, dermatologists say that children still-born due to syphilis have become a common feature. Bihar has the highest infant mortality rate averaging 20 per cent as compared to the all-India average of 12.5 per cent and doctors say the main killer is congenital STD.

**Guilt Feelings:** The psychological damage STD patients incur is incalculable. Psychologists report that most people who contract the disease get 'venereophobia': apart from the guilt feeling, they are constantly worried about whether they are fully cured. In Bhopal an extraordinary case of venereophobia was reported from the Hamidia Hospital. A middle-aged security officer in a bank who had had a casual fling soon became obsessed with the thought that he had syphilis and was passing it on to his wife. He visited several clinics including those in Bangalore and Delhi and even though all the tests were negative he would insist that he had syphilis. Finally, unable to bear the shame, he committed suicide last year.

In Madras psychologist Subramanian's study showed that as many as two-thirds of the men and women victims surveyed not only felt "upset" or "guilty" but they feared that if their plight was known they would be boycotted by society. An equally large percentage felt they would become sexually inadequate and anxiety

## More than just the stigma is the alarming and widespread ignorance about STD and its harmful effects, even among the educated class.

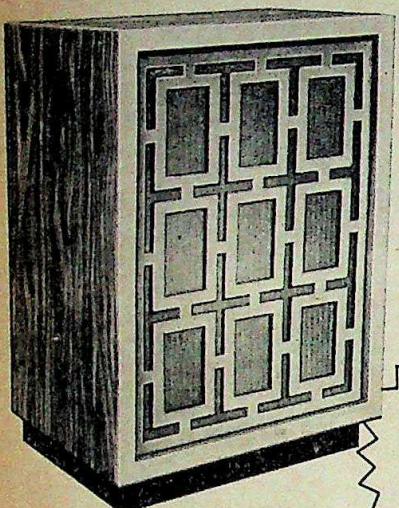


due to the loss of manpower in the form of abstinence from work...or in the form of lack of concentration due to psychological disturbances is also menacing."

In Bombay, the IHO which has been advocating medical treatment for prostitutes has come up with some astounding figures. It estimates that if each of the 10,000 prostitutes in the Kamatipura-Falkland Road area, where 90 per cent of them suffer from STD, has an average of four customers a day, a staggering 36,000 people could be contracting the disease from them every day. Even if a conservative estimate is taken of 20,000 victims and a low sum of Rs 10 is taken for treatment of each case, the Government would have to spend crores to cure the victims of Kamatipura every year.

The team calculated that if instead, all 10,000 prostitutes were treated, it would cost only Rs 15 a month for each of them resulting in a total annual expense of only Rs 18 lakh. Said IHO's Gilada: "The social and economic cost of allowing this proliferation of STD to go on is phenomenal. We have found in our interviews that prostitutes would be willing to pay Rs 15 a month for legal status and medical treatment since they presently spend much more than this on *hasta* to policemen and payment to quack doctors. "The

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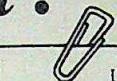
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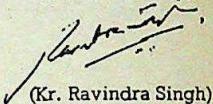
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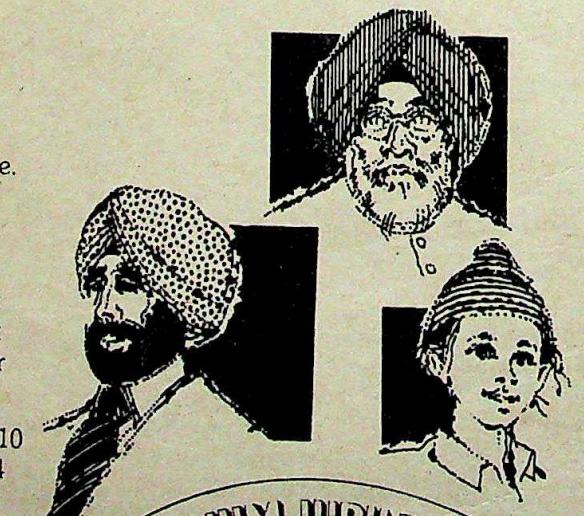
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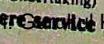


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TODAY, JULY

which is the first step to psychoneurosis. In Calcutta, an 18-year-old girl contracted gonorrhoea and is cured but refuses to mix with her family and friends and suffers from acute depression. Mental disharmony is another common outcome of STD: in Bangalore an engineer divorced his wife when he found that she was suffering from syphilis. Ironically, she had taken the STD test as part of her medical examination when they planned to marry in the US.

WHILE the scourge of Venus continues to wreak havoc on the country's millions, specialists are hard put to suggest measures to halt the growing trend. Legalised prostitution, improved treatment facilities and the introduction of sex education are their persistent themes. In Bangalore, WHO consultant Marie Mascarenhas said bluntly: "We are closing our eyes to the fact that prostitution will flourish in a repressive society like ours. It is better to license prostitution so that at least there is a regular medical inspection of brothels."

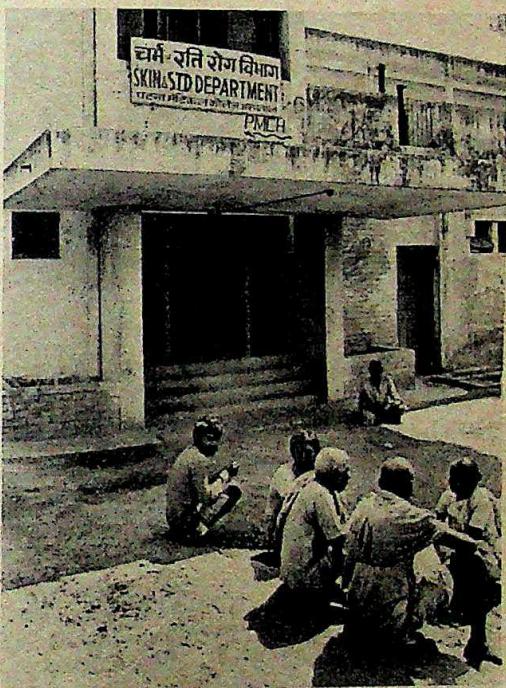
The police method of raiding brothels to curb prostitution has hardly helped as Bihar realised. Instead of reducing the number of brothels it has only resulted in an increased number of 'night clubs' on the streets. A Home Department circular lamely admitted: "Prostitution continues to flourish in all its ugliness in our cities and towns in spite of the enforcement of the Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act."

But legalising prostitution is not going to change the situation unless the governments agree to carry out stringent medical checks of all the brothels. Moreover, as a Karnataka police officer said: "It's not merely a stroke of the genius that can legalise prostitution. Will our conservative Indian society accord sanction?"

**Sex Education:** Most specialists are now pinning on sex education as the new panacea. Their arguments are based on the fact that STD is high in India because studies have shown that a majority of the victims have no idea of the damage that could be caused by these diseases. Coupled with the rising profligacy it could lead to disastrous consequences. But if they are educated on the dangers of STD it may discourage them from taking casual sex and it could also lead to immediate detection and treatment of the disease. Said Subramaniam: "Health education which includes family life education should start in schools and should be undertaken by the institutions in collaboration with parents."

The CHEB studies in New Delhi on sex education are encouraging. The researchers found that the victims easily absorbed the information imparted. In fact many of them said if they had known about the dangers of the disease they would not have indulged in casual sex. Almost 54 per cent of them vowed to keep away from prostitutes. A third of them said they would like sex education to be

### Hardly 5 per cent of the cases visit government hospitals with their badly equipped STD clinics.



introduced in schools and colleges and wanted films to be produced to educate people. The most acceptable method for sex education seemed to be individual talk and the researchers suggested that in all STD clinics treatment should be combined with education. Said CHEB director B.C. Ghosal: "There is tremendous scope to impart sex education not only in schools and colleges but to the general public in the country."

**Lukewarm Response:** Yet, when the CHEB decided to put it to practice by producing a 10-minute documentary film on STD it was thwarted by the censors for almost two years because it exposed too much of the male and female anatomy. Said an exasperated CHEB official: "How can we talk about sex without showing genitals?" Finally, last month, after a few cuts were made, the censors reluctantly passed the film but gave it an 'A' certificate.

Schools and colleges too have been hesitant to introduce sex education classes because of stiff resistance from parents. Said a Calcutta school principal: "We are for sex education but do you think we want to face a boycott by parents?" In Chandigarh a schoolteacher said bluntly: "Sex is taboo and we do not know how to teach the students. There are not many books available."

A bank officer in Hyderabad who was dead against sex education said angrily: "Youth power will be channelised as promiscuous power if sex education is taken to the classrooms. Most Indian films are providing enough and more." To which a Bangalore dermatologist retorted: "If you don't teach your children sex the dogs will!"

**Fresh Effort:** While the debate for sex education may be a prolonged one the Union Government has recently woken up to the fact that STD is getting out of control. Three years ago the Indian Council of Medical Research set up a task force of venereologists to chalk out a programme to control STD. The task force recommended that epidemiological studies should be immediately carried out to know "the quantum of the problem". They felt that an efficient surveillance programme was vital and health education about STD absolutely necessary to check the menace.

Early this year the Union Government decided to set aside Rs 90 lakh under the Sixth Plan for an "effective STD programme". STD adviser Dharam Pal says the Government plans to establish five regional centres at Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi, Hyderabad and Madras for teaching and training primary health centre staff to handle STD. Two centres in Madras and Delhi have already started functioning. Apart from that, survey-cum-mobile units will be set up in these centres to study the magnitude of the problem and to provide treatment. A concerted effort is being made to properly equip district hospitals and laboratories to test STD cases. And as regards education, they plan to print and freely distribute pamphlets on the disease.

While these are efforts in the right direction, venereologists fear it is only a drop in the ocean. As ASHI's Begum points out: "The STD problem is not only medical but social as well. To control STD requires a coordinated medical, public health, legislative and social therapy approach." But by the time these organisations can put their act together and get down to some "coordinated" work, many fear that the fattened worm in India's apple would have already munched its way through her core.

—RAJ CHENGAPPA with bureau reports

ANDHRA PRADESH

# Conjugal Code

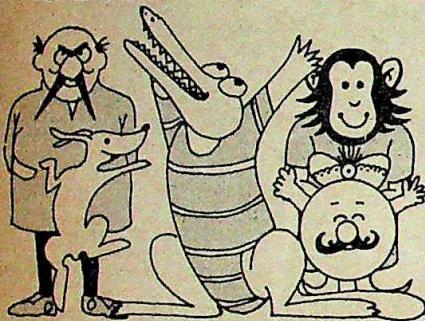
THE WOMEN's movement in the country received a shot in the arm last fortnight when Justice P.A. Choudary of the Andhra Pradesh High Court struck down the Hindu law for restitution of conjugal rights. Calling it a "savage and barbarous remedy violating the right to privacy and human dignity guaranteed by Article 21 of the Constitution", Justice Choudary declared: "This matrimonial remedy works only as an engine of oppression to be operated by the husband, for the benefit of the husband against the wife." Earlier, under Section 9 of the Hindu Marriages Act, 1955, it was possible for husband or wife to regain conjugal rights by a court decree; and to make sure the unwilling party complied,

cy. Justice Choudary rejected her plea about jurisdiction, but went on to strike down the conjugal rights law as unconstitutional.

**Rights Violated:** The judgement describes vividly the British and American experience and how conjugal rights laws were scrapped in Britain on the recommendations of the Scarman Law Commission in the '70s. A decree for restitution of conjugal rights, Justice Choudary reasoned, constitutes the grossest forms of violation of an individual's right to privacy; denies the woman her free choice, whether, when and how her body is to become the vehicle for the procreation of another human being; deprives a woman of control over her choices as to when and how, and by whom the various parts of her body,



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The Children's Magazine



Justice Choudary (left) and Sarita and her husband at their wedding: an important step

such a decree could be enforced by attaching or selling the property of the recalcitrant one, as provided for in the Civil Procedure Code.

The issue came up when south Indian film star Sarita petitioned the court to revise the stand of the Cuddapah subordinate judge in considering a petition for restitution of conjugal rights filed by T. Venkatasubbaiah, a farmer whom she married in 1975. Sarita contended that the Cuddapah judge had no jurisdiction as she and Venkatasubbaiah parted in Madras—where she had joined her parents and started looking for film roles—less than a year after their marriage in Tirupati.

Nearly five years after the separation, when Sarita had made it big in films such as the Telugu *Maro Charitra* and *Kokilamma* and the Tamil *Thaneer Thaneer* and was adjudged best heroine of 1982 by the Andhra Pradesh Government, her husband filed a conjugal rights petition. Sarita contended that this offended the guarantee to life, personal liberty and human dignity and decen-

should be allowed to be sensed; and take away her autonomy or control over the intimacies of personal identity. Said Justice Choudary: "Nothing can conceivably be more degrading to human dignity and monstrous to human spirit than to subject a person by the long arm of the law to a positive sex act. It could never be treated as a mere act of body that could be ordered by the state."

The judgement has been widely welcomed. Says Sarita's lawyer: "This judgement is symbolic of the evolution and present status of the concept of personal liberty and amplifies that the use of outside force is not the appropriate way to bring about reconciliation between wife and husband." Vaccatha Kannabiran of the Stree Shakti Sangathan, Hyderabad, summed up exultantly: "It is a very important step forward for the women's movement which may not have been possible five years ago. It is in the line of recent judgements to check crimes against women."

—AMARNATH K. MENON

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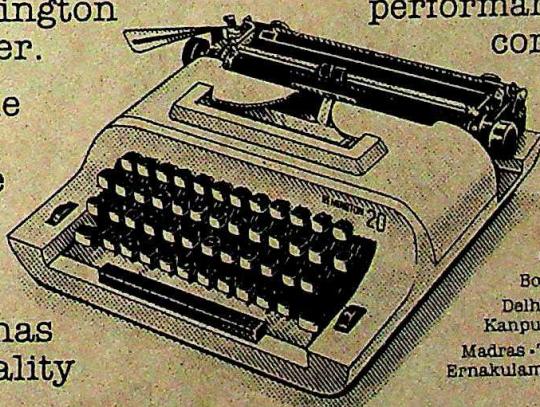
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INDO-US RELATIONS

# Fleshing Up Friendships



THE JAPANESE diplomat was bewildered. Biting his lips, his forehead furrowed in three deep lines, he said, "I frankly do not understand. The Defence Minister, Venkataraman, goes to Moscow to negotiate large purchases of defence equipment. Rajiv Gandhi goes to Moscow on a goodwill visit. Shultz comes to Delhi and the press describes his visit as a 'success'. What's happening between India and the superpowers?"

Nothing very much new is happening, the Japanese diplomat had to be told. The Indo-Soviet friendship remains in business. The prime minister takes care to reassure the Soviets that there is no question of India tilting towards Washington. And the Shultz visit confirms that a tilt is impossible. India and the United States remain as far apart on all regional and global issues as they have been since January 1980. However, something has nevertheless happened to the Indo-US relationship. The Reagan Administration and Mrs Gandhi have agreed that while continuing to pull in opposite directions on all issues of political and strategic substance, the US and India can still improve bilateral relations, particularly in the field of trade, investment, technology transfers and joint ventures in third countries.

**Novel Move:** This sophisticated act — separation of bilateral relations from the political-strategic issues — is entirely new in the history of Indo-US relations. Until now, US administrations have seen India through cold war lenses; the scale of relations has been determined by the state of relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union. That "central relationship" made Pakistan a "vital partner" of the US in a seemingly unending and frustratingly unsuccessful global enterprise to contain, if not reduce, the USSR. If the US did not hurt India as it did some of the other Third World friends of the USSR, it was because, until the 1980s, America was only marginally involved in South Asia, and the region itself in the US-Soviet cold war.

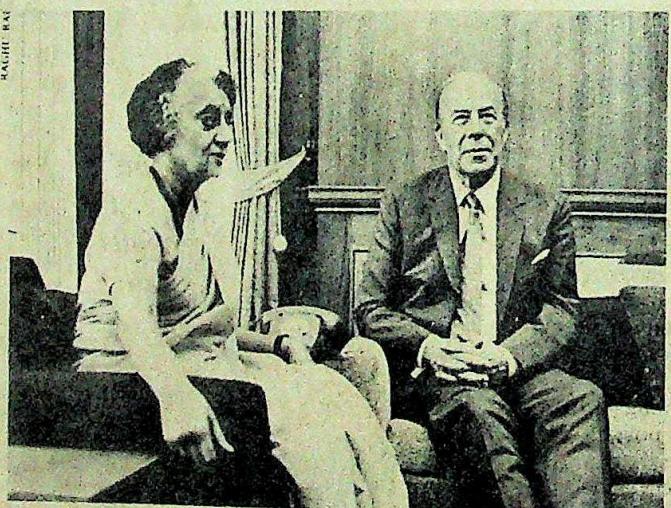
Even in 1981, Washington's attitude towards India was one of anger and spite. The Reagan people saw India as a camp-follower, if not a proxy, of the Soviet Union. Reviving the Dullesian doctrine of those who are not for us are against us, the Reagan strategists were determined to hurt India where India was, and is, most vulnerable: concessional credits from international monetary institutions like IDB and IMF. This was at a time when India had hardly regained its breath after the severe jolt suffered by its economy from the outlandish hike in oil prices in 1979.

The Reagan tactics didn't work. India put up a stubborn resistance. What helped really was the deep, and deepening world recession. The West European allies of the US were the first to wake up to the importance of the vast potential of the Indian market. They were soon followed by Japan. America Inc intervened with the

Reagan Administration. If India was going to open up its market to international investment and for large-scale technology transfers, America Inc. couldn't afford to lose out to the West Europeans and the Japanese. The Department of Commerce took up the case of America Inc. For the first time in the history of US-India relations, a domestic factor entered the process of foreign policy decision-making. In 1982-83 India became for the United States what an American scholar has somewhat clumsily called an "interimist" question — a mixture of international and domestic concerns. "Interimist" issues beg for ambivalent solutions. When a major domestic factor intervenes, the Reagan Administration cannot pursue even a most endearing game — one-upping the Soviet Union on a global scale — to its logical frontiers. It has to offer long-term contracts to the Russians for bulk purchase of America's over-stocks of corn and wheat, for which there are no buyers although, paradoxically, 800 million human beings in the developing world suffer from malnutrition and hunger. And when Reagan sells grain to the Russians, he handcuffs his diplomacy to pressure the West Europeans not to sell equipment for the Soviet Union's Siberian pipeline.

Compelling Reasons: India's need to get access to American capital, technology and above all, goodwill was even more compelling. The United States takes 14 per cent of India's exports, and, in recent years, has been buying more India's industrial products than in the past. Without the maximum American goodwill, India cannot hope to win its battle for concessional aid. Neoliberalism acts as the mother of new ideas. The Reagan people discovered sometime in 1982 that India was not a satellite of the Soviet Union. The man who made this discovery possible was George Shultz, the first corporate economist to become US secretary of state. The man who helped him most was Harry Barnes Jr., ambassador to India. Early 1982, the State Department succeeded in persuading Reagan that he invite Indira Gandhi to pay a state visit to the US. The new concept of bilateralism readily won the prime minister's glad approval.

George Shultz is a fine diplomatic craftsman, having served several presidents as cabinet officer. A corporate economist, he realises that in the 1980s, economic and fiscal issues have become the key of world politics, that the industrialist welfare capitalist system faces a mortal crisis in its glittering career of 40 years, and that beyond a certain limit the second cold war cannot be waged. Though he bowed to the principal thrusts of Reaganism, Shultz is not a Reagan man, not even as much as his predecessor, Alexander Haig. Shultz has accepted the Reagan hard-line on arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union. But he is not spoiling for conflicts in the Third World. Given time, Shultz would probably nudge the knight-errant president towards a settlement of the Afghanistan problem. In short, Shultz would prefer to keep the second cold



Mrs Gandhi (left) and Shultz: cautious overtures

related to the bipolar strategic US-Soviet relationship. His knowledge of economics tells him that to take on the Soviet Union and forces of militant left-wing nationalism in the Third World on a wide geographical scale would further aggravate the economic crisis both in the North and the South and push the world economic and monetary systems to the point of collapse.

SHULTZ'S visit to Delhi cannot be seen separately from his earlier visit to Bangkok and later visit to Islamabad. Nor can these visits be separated from the fact that he was urgently ordered by Reagan to shift his diplomatic attention from South-east and South Asia to the Middle East where the split in the Palestine Liberation Organisation and the Syrian refusal to withdraw troops from the Golan valley in Lebanon until all Israeli forces are pulled out unconditionally from southern Lebanon are not the only disturbing developments. Much else is happening there to keep alarm bells ringing in the Crisis Room on the seventh floor of Foggy Bottom and the basement of the White House.

Recent reports suggest that Iraqi economy is facing a breakdown following Saudi Arabia's inability to pump an endless flow of dollars into the wasting war between Iraq and Iran. The Baath regime is said to be threatened by a wave of Islamic fundamentalism of the Khomeini vintage. In Iran, Khomeini is reported to be terminally ill, and civil war after his death is taken to be inevitable. More

recently, there are persistent reports of squabbles between the king and the crown prince of Saudi Arabia, dividing the country's 6,000-strong princely ruling class. In Egypt, a fundamentalist movement is gaining ground against the pro-American policies of Hosni Mubarak, prolonging the country's crippling economic and military dependencies on the United States. For many years now, the US has been trying to keep Soviet influence out of the Middle East. This policy has succeeded at times only to register failure at other times. Many West European analysts believe that despite periodical setbacks, Soviet influence is not waning, but growing. A major military or political reversal may well polarise large sections of the Arab masses against their rulers who are seen as allies of the US. The

US secretary of state recently advised the US administration to invite the Soviets to co-sponsor an Israeli-Palestinian settlement. "Russian influence cannot be excluded. It better be put to good use," it said.

**Explosive Situation:** This is also broadly the view of the Indian prime minister. Immediately after Shultz left Delhi for Islamabad, Mrs Gandhi despatched one of her ablest diplomats, Romesh Bhandari, on a fact-finding and nerve-soothing mission to several Middle Eastern countries. Bhandari returned with images of a Middle East prepared for sudden, unpredictable and explosive developments. It is hyperbole to attribute effective tranquillizers to India's capacity to administer chronic Middle Eastern conflicts.

Shultz did not talk tough in the Middle East. In fact, he did not talk tough in Islamabad, Delhi or Bangkok either. In Bangkok, where the foreign ministers of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the FFC met at a day-long session with the ASEAN foreign ministers, Shultz kept a low profile. He made it clear to the ASEAN ministers that the US would not get directly involved in their quarrels if they could not be adverse to a political settlement on Kampuchea if it could be worked out between ASEAN and Hanoi. Shultz was painfully

aware that the western powers were already split on the Kampuchean issue. France did not attend the Bangkok meeting. The new Australian foreign minister could not be dislodged from his government's resolve to extend development aid to Vietnam: at the Bangkok meeting, William Hayden forcefully argued that time was an ally of Hanoi, and went off to the Vietnamese capital on an official visit while the foreign minister of Canada made noises that sounded disturbingly like echoes of Hayden rather than of Dhanabalan of Singapore.

**Image-Building:** In Delhi, Shultz was keen on projecting a mellow and reasonable image of the Reagan Administration. His job was to sell American friendship, not to denounce the Soviet Union. On several occasions, he stressed that the US and Russia were in contact at many levels in many places carrying on dialogues on outstanding issues. He was not provoked by questions about \$5 billion worth of weapons reportedly contracted by India during the recent visit of Venkataraman to Moscow. In Islamabad, Shultz refused to answer a loaded question about Kashmir and stressed the importance for America of the friendship of both Pakistan and India. Whatever he may have told President Zia-ul-Haq and Foreign Minister Shahebzada Yakub Khan privately, the position he took publicly was that the US was not obstructing a political settlement of the Afghanistan issue.

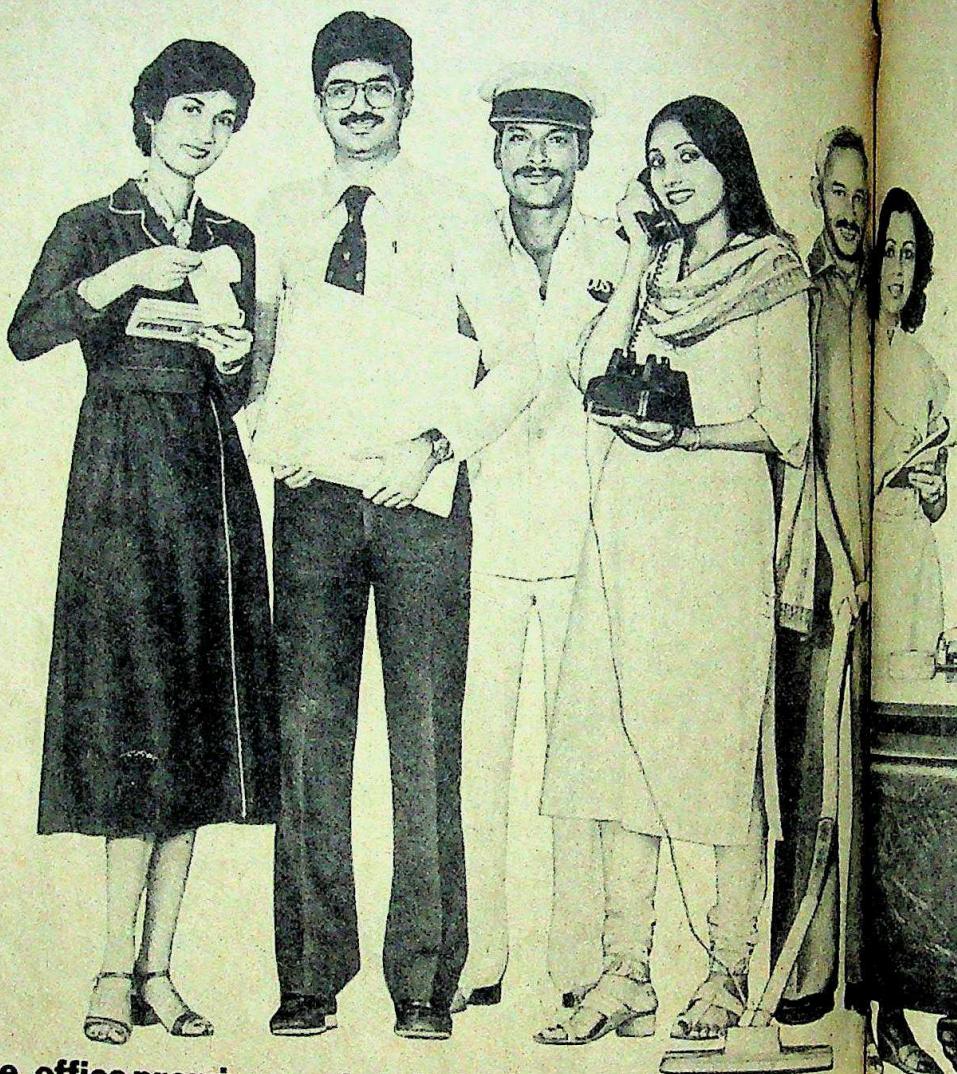
That may be at least partially true. In the third year of its career, the Reagan Administration is probably not escalating conflicts in the Third World outside Latin America. But it is not helping in getting them settled. The result is a chain of deadlocks over Kampuchea, Afghanistan and the Middle East, and crucial issues like reforming the world monetary system or resolving trade imbalances between the North and the South. It almost appears that the US has no positive policy with regard to these crises and is holding up other forces that are trying to lower the threshold of differences, and to bring about settlements. Too many deadlocks tend to drive tensions underneath a deceptive surface of situation-under-control. Tensions piling up underneath the surface have the nasty habit of exploding suddenly.

By sheer coincidence, Fred Halliday's new book *The Making of the Second Cold War*, arrived in bookstalls in India during the visit of Secretary

Shultz. Halliday's closely argued, unapologetic study confirms that the responsibility for igniting the current cold war is "shared but unequal". He sees two main causes of the new cold war -- American refusal to accept reduced military superiority over the USSR and its unwillingness to recognise any role for Moscow in the Third World. It remains to be seen whether Ronald Reagan chooses to wind down the new cold war in the final year of his presidency or his second term if he gets one.

Shultz's Delhi visit was important not because of the concrete results it achieved, which were small and somewhat futuristic, but because of its tone and style. The US secretary of state felt comfortable on the territory of a Third World democracy that has close and extensive friendly linkages with the Soviet Union and that sewed up, even as he was talking to its leaders in Delhi, a big new arms purchase agreement in Moscow. Nevertheless, he and the Indian leader worked together to lend some flesh and blood to the fledgling Indo-US friendship. It is one of the few relationships that are moving ahead in a world of multiple deadlocks. For that alone it should deserve one cheer.

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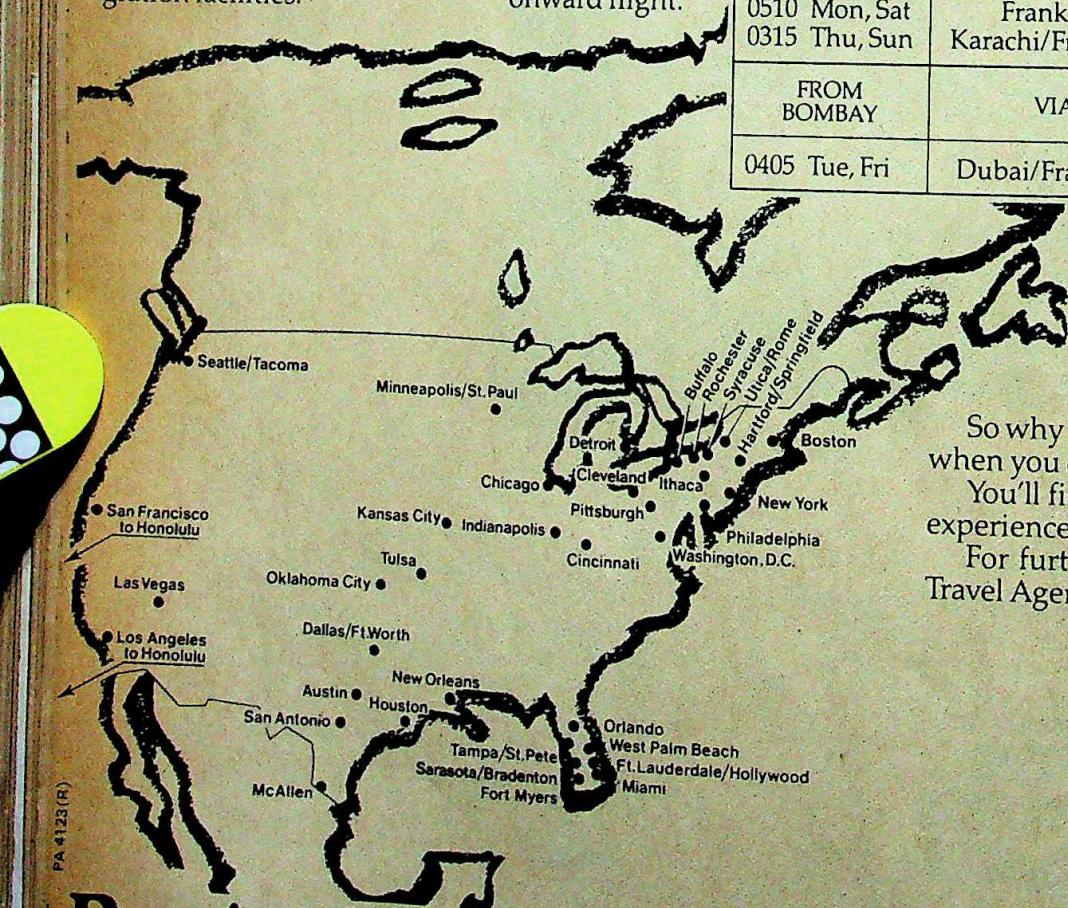
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# Dangerous Dose

THE THIEF who stole a radioactive pencil from an unguarded box in a factory in Bhandup, Bombay, last October is still at large, but an innocent man is paying a terrible price for his crime. Kallu Gangram Ghare, a railway gangman in his early twenties, is branded for life — all because he picked up the shiny but deadly radioactive pencil from the railway tracks at Ghatkopar.

For the past eight months, Ghare has been undergoing painful treatment at the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) hospital at Trombay for the radiation-inflicted third degree burns. Although there has been some improvement in his condition — Chief Medical Officer V.R. Shah of BARC says his skin graft "has healed after plastic surgery" — the radiation has taken a serious toll. Married two years ago, the young man is now sterile, and chances of his contracting cancer have increased. Weak and listless, the simple youth from Igatpuri realises that there is some connection between the silver pencil and the severe blow to his health, but the subtleties of science and the implications of radiation are beyond him. He is unaware that, during the few years he carried the pencil in his pocket, he received a body dose of some 125 rems, while his thighs, which were in direct contact with the pocket, received a local dose of 3,000 rems. These levels are way above the admissible limits. A person who receives a body dose of 300 to 400 rems faces a 50 per cent chance of death within a month.

**Dangerous:** Ghare has been unlucky. In these radiographic pencils have caused worse tragedies. In Mexico, in 1963, a 10-year-old boy picked up a small pencil lying by the road, and put it in his pocket. That night, his mother emptied his pocket, and put the pencil in a kitchen drawer, where it continually emitted radioactivity to the unsuspecting family. Within a month, the grandmother, the little boy, the mother and a two-year-old child died, one after another.

These innocuous-looking pencils are used in the radiography of casting and welding, as a non-destructive method of detecting flaws in metal. When in use, the pencil is placed inside a radiographic camera, and is lifted from its 20 kg lead container with remote control tongs.

Ghare is fortunate the pencil was located comparatively soon. The metal testing firm which owned the BARC-manufactured pencil had sent an employee, along with the radiographic equipment to the Bhandup factory. As a long weekend followed, the employee left the pencil in its lead container with the factory guard. When he returned on October 4, the pencil was missing. Detection teams from BARC fanned out in search around the Bhandup-Mulund area. Warnings were printed in the newspapers and broadcast over radio, and dispensaries were asked to report any suspicious-looking burn cases. The breakthrough came in October 14,

when a BARC man waiting at the Ghatkopar station noticed the needle of his monitoring equipment moving agitatedly. The pencil was traced to a nylon bag hanging in the goods yard at Ghatkopar where gangmen slept. Although warned of the consequences, the gangmen denied any knowledge of the pencil. On November 2, a badly-burnt Ghare, accompanied by a relative, came to the BARC hospital and admitted picking up the pencil and carrying it for a few hours before storing it in his trunk and later putting it in someone else's bag.

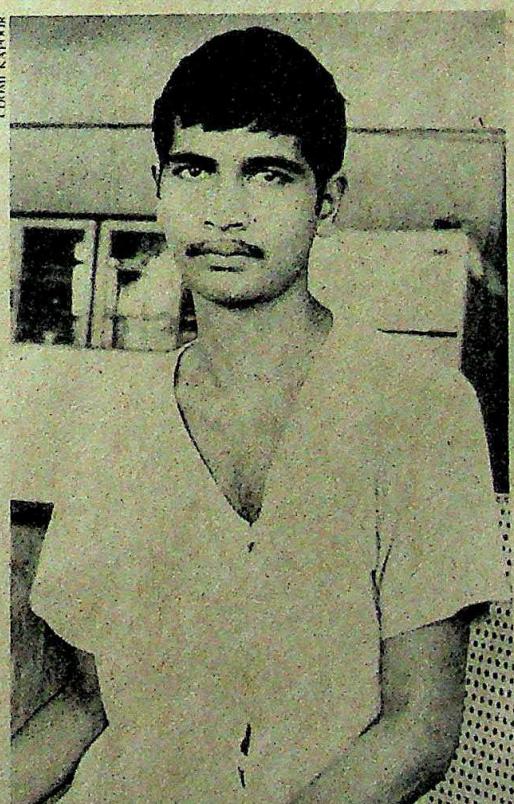
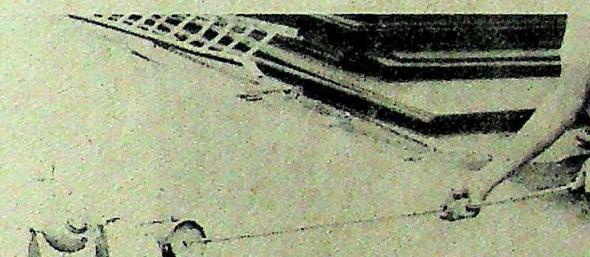
**Theft:** The hue and cry raised by BARC over this missing pencil contrasts ironically with the silence and secrecy that shrouded the disappearance of a similar pencil from the BARC complex this January. The pencil was stolen from the sanctum of the higher-ups at BARC, and news of its loss leaked out only after it was recovered in Santa Cruz. An arrested radiography contractor confessed to the crime and disclosed the location of the pencil — he had stolen it because he needed it for a rush job.

A decade ago, there were 200 pencils in use; today there are 600. V.N. Meckoni, director, Nuclear Safety Group, BARC, says that because of demands from industry, such pencils are being manufactured in greater number by BARC, but that a strict account is kept of each issued source, and firms given licences only after a thorough check that their employees have gone through safety tests. "Nowadays safety requirements and awareness among users is much more than before. Accidents will not happen in the future," says he.

But the track record does not justify such optimism — in January this year, at a workshop on gamma radiography at BARC it was admitted that 50 accidents had taken place in the country in the use of industrial radiography. G. Subramaniam of the Division of Radiological Protection insists that most of these accidents were minor, usually misplacements within the building itself. Only two accidents were major enough to merit entry in an international scientific journal.

Meanwhile, the mystery of the Bhandup theft is still unsolved. It is conjectured that the pencil was spirited away by some rival company which needed it — it is unlikely that a curious passer-by just unscrewed the container to take a look. Whoever he is, if the culprit enters a hospital, a blood test will identify him as the thief — but if he doesn't, he will have to suffer the horrific consequences of the radiation.

— COOMI KAPOOR



A radioactive pencil being removed (above) and Ghare: tragic experience



SMUGGLING

## Border Beef

FOR THE drought-stricken population of Rajasthan, nature's cruel spell has taken more than its fair share. While thousands of men, women and children are going hungry, hordes of cattle are lying dead in pockets of the desert belt of western Rajasthan. Nearly 40 per cent of cattle has already been transported from the affected areas to neighbouring states like Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat. But there has been a major spin-off from severe drought - villagers in remote areas of the state are indulging in smuggling cattle and contraband to Pakistan, in the hope of making a little money as well as saving their cattle from dying of starvation.

Unfortunately, it isn't the villagers who are making the fast buck, but smugglers who buy cattle, particularly cows, from the desperate villagers, and who stealthily transport them across the border to Pakistan and sell them at double the price to butchers. A cow sold for Rs 150 on the border areas of Rajasthan is resold in Pakistan by smugglers for prices ranging between Rs 500 and Rs 600. Last fortnight, cattle was sold at ridiculous prices ranging from Rs 15 to Rs 20 a head at the famous Tilwara cattle fair near Barmer. The throwaway prices quoted at the fair offered proof that the villagers were keen to sell cattle they could not afford to keep anymore. Coupled with this is the fear that cattle smuggling will increase as drought conditions worsen over the months.

Ironically, two decades ago, cattle used to be smuggled out of Pakistan into India as it commanded better prices here. But tables have turned and since last year an estimated 2,000 cattle on its way to Pakistan was seized by the police. Said Adman Singh, a

labourer in Jaisalmer district: "It is for the Government to stop smuggling. Being poor, we are helpless. We are also left with no option. Rather than leave the animals to fend for themselves, we have to sell them." There are, however, farmers from some districts of the state who have good feed stocks and can afford to feed their cattle and thereby view the situation differently.

Smuggling of cattle can be arrested if the state Government takes stringent measures like rushing free cattle fodder to the affected areas. Although the Famine Relief Minister, Hanuman Prabhakar claims that subsidised fodder is being distributed in every district, villagers in the desert belt have contradicted him. But, for the poor villagers, even the subsidised fodder is of no help. Inquired Sang Singh of Chhayan village in Jaisalmer: "When we do not have money to buy food, how can we buy subsidised fodder for our starving cattle?"

Meanwhile, smugglers are having a field day at the expense of the poor villagers. They have been escaping the scrutiny of the Border Security Force (BSF) along the 1,028 km border between Rajasthan and Pakistan. Although there have been contraband and cattle seizures by BSF patrolmen from the border, they have however been of little significance. News of cattle smuggling rarely spreads and thus government officials are unaware of it. Said Chief Minister Shiv Charan Mathur: "We have no reports of smuggling. Even if it has been going on, it has not been major enough to cause alarm."

The lax vigilance authorities and unattended borders have also encouraged a great deal of smuggling by villagers who live near the border. Said a senior BSF official:

**Impoverished villagers in Jaisalmer:  
"We are helpless"**

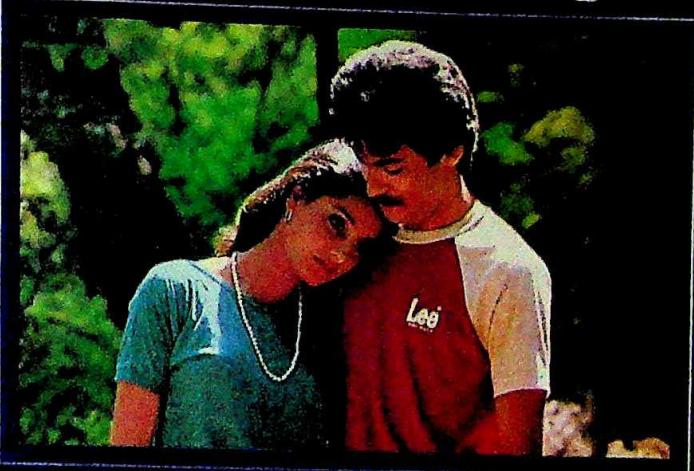
"For these villagers, there is nothing else to do. Drought has destroyed their occupation of farming and cattle breeding. The little contraband they sell helps them to acquire few square meals." The villagers take silver bidis and liquor to Pakistan and bring back electronic goods, dry fruits and cheap readymade garments. Sam, 50 km from the border is a key point, but customs officials have been posted there. The same is the case with two other important points - Ramgarh and Mialjar.

Meanwhile, the BSF and the customs officials are at loggerheads with each other, each accusing the other of corruption. Says customs official: "Jaisalmer and Barmer have a border of over 700 km with Pakistan but the total seizures for the year work out to less than Rs 20 lakh. Hardly 2 per cent of the actual contraband is being seized at the border. The BSF jawans are in connivance with the smugglers." Police officials, however, maintain that the smuggling activity is not being arrested by the customs and connivance between the customs officials and cattle smugglers became evident when last November, 73 cattle heads which were seized by the police were resold by the customs to the same smuggler.

That the police and the BSF officials have pulled in more seizures than the customs has brought into sharp focus the ineffectiveness of the customs department, which apparently spends more time auctioning seized cattle rather than looking out for smuggled cattle. Said R.S. Rathod, the customs superintendent in Jaisalmer: "The cattle have become a headache for us. Nobody wants to buy them and we spend the whole year auctioning cattle." And obviously no less of a headache for the demoralised villagers.

- RAMESH MENON in Jaisa

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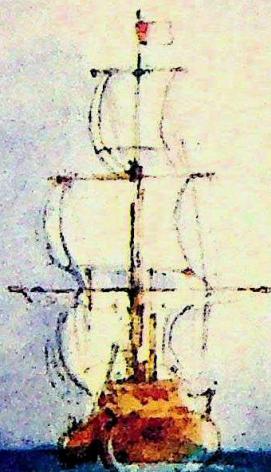
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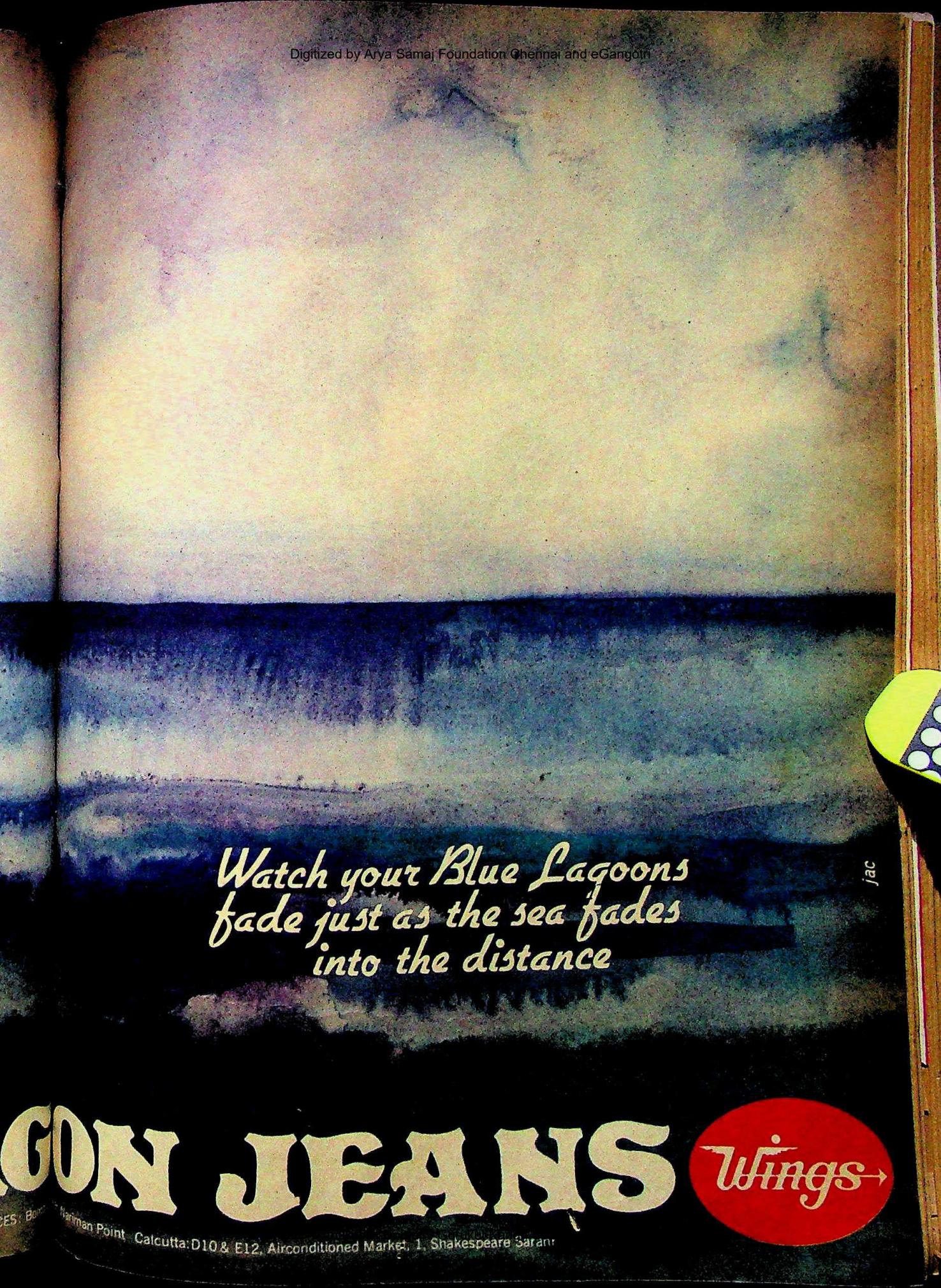


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# Hard Pressed

THE latest of a long line of bewildering turnabouts, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran last fortnight professed to repeal the notorious 1982 amendment to the state's Anti-Scurrility Act. But journalists in the state were hardly jubilant about the move against the Act that rendered publication of "grossly indecent or scurrilous matter" a "cognisable and non-bailable offence".

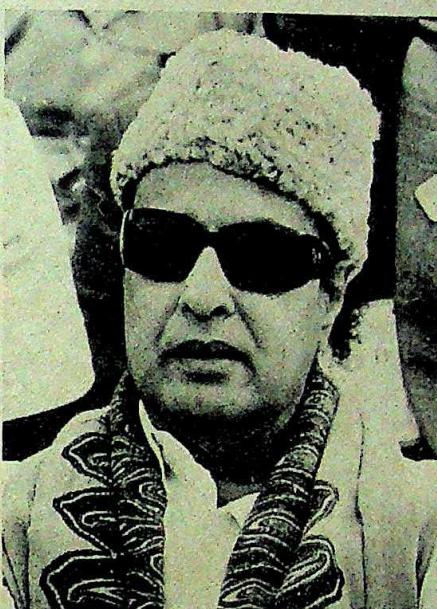
If the chief minister's promise has been made by a general cynicism, it is because of his vacillation and lack of any serious intent at this time, to match words with action. A Madras-based special correspondent of an English daily: "The chief minister's announcement is an empty oral assurance and does not hold any water. The amendment is still in the statute book, and if the MGR Government really intends to repeal it, it has to definitely issue a repeal ordinance, to be followed with the introduction of fresh legislation when the Assembly meets next. But nothing of this sort seems to be opening."

**Doubtful:** The doubt seems eminently justified. When, last month, sidelining the committee his government had set up in September, MGR stated categorically that his government was "not prepared to repeal the Act" (INDIA TODAY, June 30), the journalists in the committee resigned. In an attempt to woo them back, MGR publicly appealed to the journalists to withdraw their resignations during a speech in Coimbatore. He argued that his remarks on the law had been misunderstood and misrepresented. If anything, media reports had played down the brazenness of his anti-journalist remarks.

But the journalists refused to budge. They had not suddenly acquired some mettle, but the movement against the law had become more broad-based with the formation of the Committee Against the Tamil Nadu Press Law (CATPL) comprising public figures, writers, artists and others, besides journalists. The CATPL planned to submit a memorandum to the chief minister, signed by all those interested in the right to free expression, urging immediate and total repeal of the Anti-Scurrility Act. But even as the memorandum was drafted and signatures collected, demands for total revocation of the law came in from other sides. C.R. Irani, chairman of the Freedom Committee of the Indian Journalists' Association, and an open letter to MGR, asking him to

repeal not only the 1982 amendment, but also the parent Act of 1960 which incorporated Section 292-A into the Indian Penal Code.

**Intimidation:** Irani pointed out that, following the amendment, "it was possible for



MGR : mysterious turnarounds

the Tamil Nadu Government to intimidate journalists and newspapermen as well as newspaper vendors with threats of summary proceedings, which was not the case before." Pointing out the dangers of its misuse, he explained: "All that is necessary is for a police officer, who, in his limited vision, considers any material to be grossly indecent or scurrilous, to arrest newspapermen and newspaper vendors, and hold them in jail, for some provisions of the code of criminal procedure can be brought in play."

If that wasn't enough, the Madras Press Club organised a discussion on the press Act at which *The Hindu*'s Associate Editor N. Ram drew attention to the fact that "the legislation could be used to harass those even remotely concerned with newspaper activity." Warned well-known playwright, film personality and journalist Cho Ramaswamy: "The press is not prepared to play the role of an accomplice to the Government."

With public opinion crystallising against the law, and the gathering of a concerted opposition, MGR showed signs of relenting. He told a delegation from the People's Rights Protection Front who called on him on June 23 that the act would be "repealed

soon in deference to the appeals made by a majority of journalists." The impression that the Government was doing some re-thinking on the issue was reinforced when Information Minister R. Veerappan invited the journalists who had resigned from the review committee for an informal chat, and reassured them that if they withdrew their resignations, and gave in their recommendations on the law through the committee, the Government would act upon them. Dispelling any notion that journalists of Tamil Nadu had found new courage to fight back, three of the members who had resigned—T.R. Ramaswamy, editor of the pro-AIADMK *Makkal Kural*, V.G. Prasad Rao, special correspondent of the *Times of India*, and R. Krishnamurthy, editor of the *Dina Malar*—said they would be willing to withdraw their resignations provided they had a formal letter from Veerappan on the matter.

**Volte Face:** This is where MGR made another characteristic volte face. He brashly told newsmen in Neyveli on June 24 that "the Tamil Nadu Government would on no account repeal the Anti-Scurrility Act. At best the Government would only modify certain amendments to the legislation". He elaborated, rather sententiously: "Journalists themselves might become victims of scurrilous writing sometime or the other, and the press Act was intended to protect them as much as the public. The provisions of the Indian Penal Code are not enough to deal with scurrilous writings. The editor of an opposition-sponsored Tamil daily has the audacity to say that he will go on with his scurrilous writing no matter how many times he is arrested. If journalists behave this way, I will perhaps be constrained to invoke the Goondas Act, even."

But in another inexplicable change of policy, MGR announced the very next day that the amendment would indeed be repealed. Following a representation by the CATPL to Veerappan, MGR called the press and said: "The 1982 amendment will be withdrawn, although the original Section 292-A as adopted in 1960 will remain unchanged." The newsmen could hardly believe their ears—it was like getting a walkover when the press corps was all prepared for a major war.

After the initial surprise, the announcement only evoked cynicism. Familiar with the totally inconsistent stand taken by MGR so far, journalists are wondering whether this is not just another attempt to buy time. With the new-found affinity now blossoming between the AIADMK and the Congress(I) in the state, the ultimate fate of the Act will, for the time being at least, be a grim mystery.

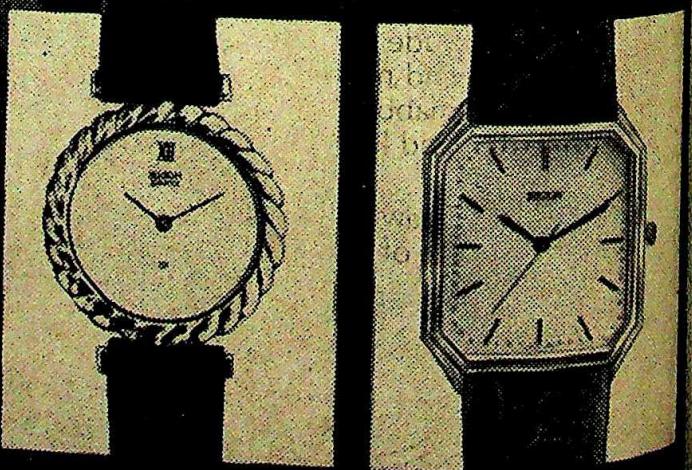
—S.H. VENKATRAMANI



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## RAJASTHAN CANAL

# Mirage In The Desert

WITHIN a few years from now, the westernmost and thirstiest fringe of Rajasthan, along the Indo-Pakistani border, is going to be brought to life by the digging of what will be the longest irrigation canal in the world up to date. Though the climate is torrid, the soil, here too, is good. When the water reaches it, it will grow wheat, maize, oil plants, citrus, fruit, and even grapes. Two million people will live by agriculture in an area which, at present, maintains no more than 100,000 pastoralists...

—Arnold J. Toynbee, *Between Oxus and Jumna*, 1961

A QUARTER-CENTURY after Toynbee presented his vision of a green desert, the Rajasthan Main Canal (445 km in length) is only now digging tortuously into its last 250 km—and his prophecy remains a distant dream. Long stretches of the canal await earth excavation, compression and lining with brick tiles, and water in the fully complete canal is flowing only until Kilometre 280—less than two-thirds of the distance to its destination at Mohangarh, 70 km north-east of Jaisalmer.

Last fortnight the Rajasthan Cabinet erected another milestone in the canal's capricious journey, and once again overturned priorities, when it approved a project expansion that immediately added Rs 310 crore to the earlier planned expenditure of Rs 534 crore. At one stroke, the Shiv Charan Mathur ministry sanctioned the construction of five additional lift canals on the main canal's left bank, which would branch off from the canal's second stage to take water to the desert districts of Jaisalmer, Jodhpur, Churu and Bikaner. The sweeping revision also added 225 km to the canal's system—and greatly lengthened the scandalous delay in completing so important a project.

**Project Delays:** The latest decision was merely another example of the adverse fate the project has suffered from the beginning. A month earlier, the Government had announced the suspension of 23 junior and assistant engineers for embezzlement, muster-roll forgery and technical irregularities, capping a long period of inactivity after the Ram

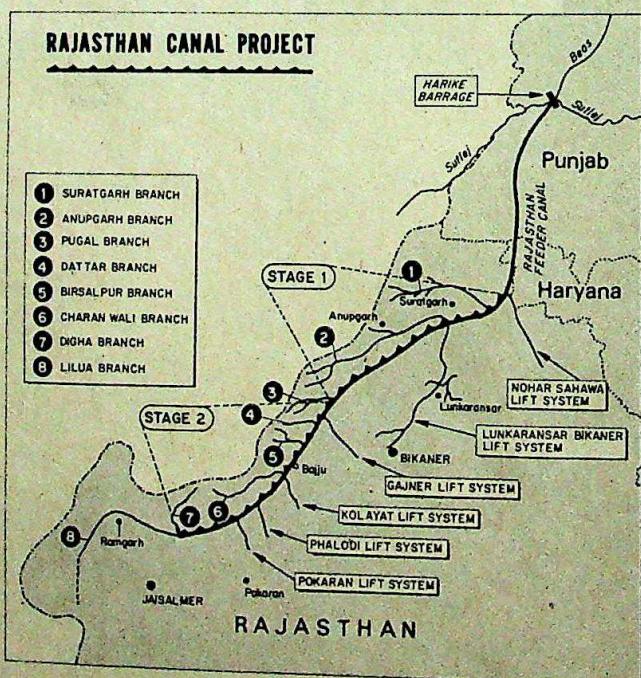
Singh inquiry committee, set up by the Janata ministry in 1978, turned in a devastating series of 28 reports indicting canal engineers for corruption.

In September last year, the then canal minister Narendra Singh Bhati had named 193 engineers in the state Assembly for substandard construction, commission of serious technical and financial irregularities, preparation of fake muster-rolls, forgery of documents, and overpayments to contractors.

Such facts evidently escaped Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's attention when she paid a perfunctory visit to a spot near Nachana, 135 km from canal's end, in late April to inspect the canal's progress. Shown up a flight of brick steps specially built into the embankment, she saw a 2,500-ft-long stretch of the canal, lined and waiting for water. On either side of this showpiece stretch, however, the canal was incomplete.

into Rajasthan where, at the Main Headworks, begins the Rajasthan Canal. For 189 km thereafter, until the Pugal, the canal transits through Stage I; Stage II, 256 km long, runs all the way from Pugal to Mohangarh.

A vast, man-made river system, Rajasthan Canal Project also includes major branch canals that fork off to its right towards the border with Pakistan, at Rangdesar, Anupgarh, Suratgarh, Dattor, Birsalpur, Charanwali, and Dharan, and the ninth and major Lilua branch takes off from the main canal's tail



Mrs Gandhi's visit papered over the canal's unpleasant truths—frequently-changing plans, political disinterest, and corruption, all sought to be excused because of the canal's dreamed-of potential.

**Massive Enterprise:** Flowing gradually south-west from the Harike Pattan Barrage, at the confluence of the Sutlej and Beas rivers in Punjab, the Rajasthan Feeder Canal runs 169 km through Punjab, and 35 km onward

Excavators near Nachana, 140 km from the canal's end, dig into the sand; the

branch and loops downwards to west of Bikaner. Last fortnight's changes added 10 km to the Lilua Branch Canal. In addition to the new lift canals will dramatically change the geography of the canal's left, or southern bank, where the only major feature was the Bikaner-Lunkaransar Lift

The tragedy is that Rajasthan itself has been uninterested in completing the canal project, says Kanwar Sain, 84, who as chief engineer of the erstwhile Bikaner State first visualised the project in 1948. "The politicians are interested in votes, and there are no votes in the canal area." Arid western Rajasthan, which is expected to benefit the most from the canal's waters, has always been represented politically. For instance, Jodhpur district (area: 38,401 sq km) is as large as Kerala, but its population

of 2.38 lakh is represented by a lone legislator. Yet this one project, when it flowers fully, will add 30 per cent to the state's cultivable area, bringing irrigation to 12.56 lakh hectares.

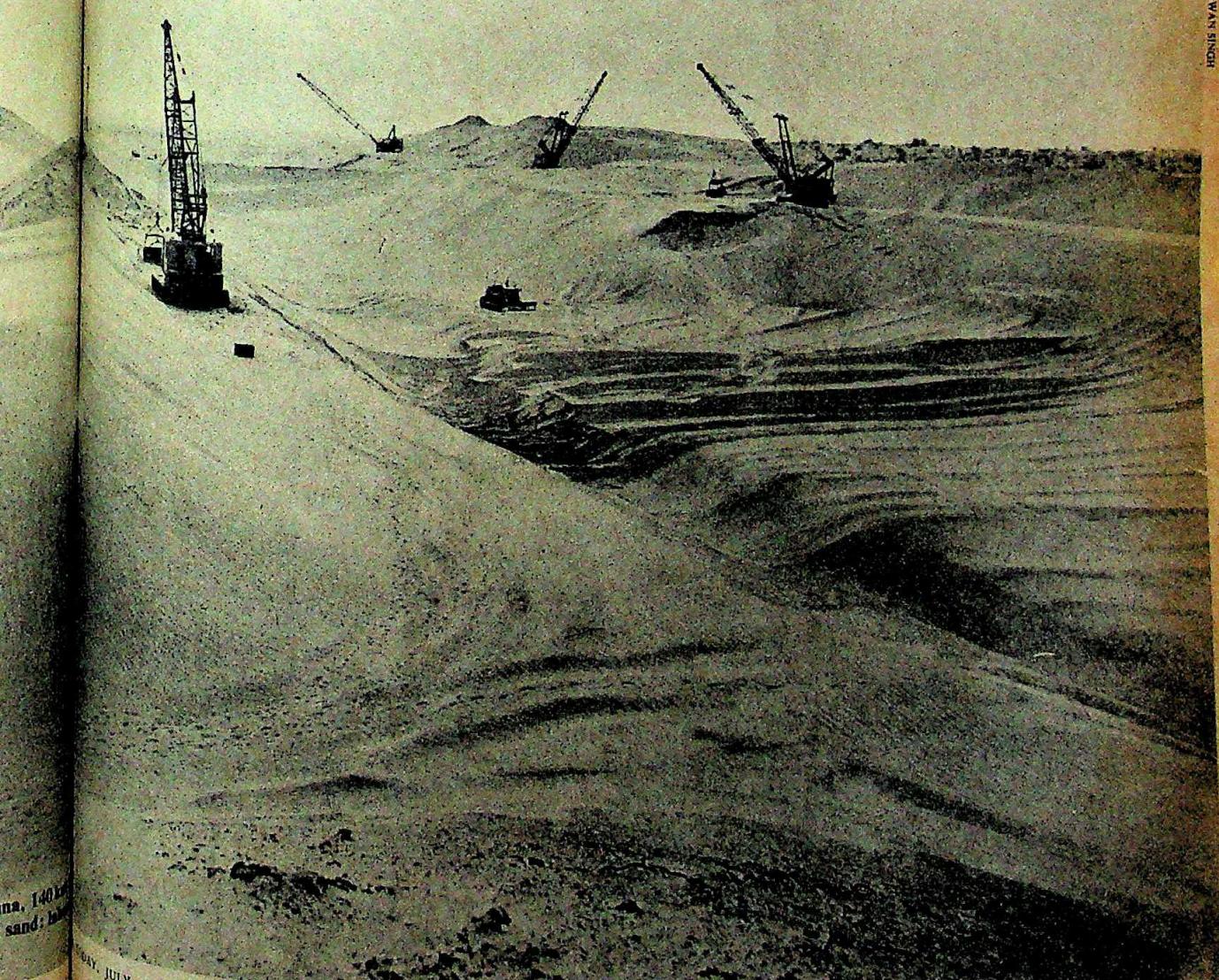
**Spiralling Cost:** Such political apathy was amply proved in the project's first decade. When work began in March 1958, completion was ambitiously scheduled for 1965. Later, the target year was shifted to 1970, and then to 1985—and last fortnight, still further to 1990. Meanwhile, the project's cost has leapt twelvefold. But between 1961 and 1971, expenditure totalled only Rs 5.79 crore because of paltry allocations of funds in the state's budgets.

Sain, who was the first chairman of the Rajasthan Canal Board in 1959, recalls that at various points the Central Government tried to take over the project in order to com-

plete it speedily. A huge and fresh injection of finance promised by the Shah of Iran fell through when he was suddenly deposed in early 1979, and the state Government vetoed the Centre's take-over proposals because it was reluctant to relinquish land-allocation powers. "Irrigation is a state subject, and so Rajasthan has adamantly refused to part with control," says Sain.

On their part, the canal's builders argue that their biggest hurdle has been the terrain through which they have to cut. There is hardly any population beyond Bikampur, 310 km along the canal, and the Rajasthan Canal Project has had to transport everything from labourers, earth for making bricks, and water to the construction site over long distances.

Canal Minister Chandan Mal Baid, who has been paying frequent visits to the



"project site, says that his priority now is to complete the main canal by March 1985—before the next assembly elections. "For the first time," he says, "we have all the inputs we need in plenty—money, men, material. I want to spread water to more and more land, to have extensive cultivation."

**Ambitious Plan:** All the vicissitudes that the canal has had to suffer since its inception, however, have thwarted what was planned to be the *raison d'être* of the Indus Waters Treaty, signed by India and Pakistan in 1960 to entitle India to use all the irrigational potential of the Sutlej, Beas and Ravi rivers. Of a total quantity of 17.87 million acre feet (MAF) of water usable by India, the Rajasthan Canal alone was expected to utilise 8.6 MAF. Chief Engineer Satya Pal Kashyap, however, admits: "At no point so far has the canal been able to take more than 44 per cent of its total discharge potential."

Stage II of the canal, in particular, has faced the greatest chaos because of the Government's uncertainty. Apart from its 256-km length between Pugal and Morenagarh, this stage also includes plans for 3,500 km of distributaries that will cover a Cultivable Commanded Area (CCA) of 6.09 lakh hectares. But this portion of the canal's route cuts through some of Rajasthan's most inhospitable terrain, with a vicious rock substratum that impedes digging, and miles of shifting sand-dunes.

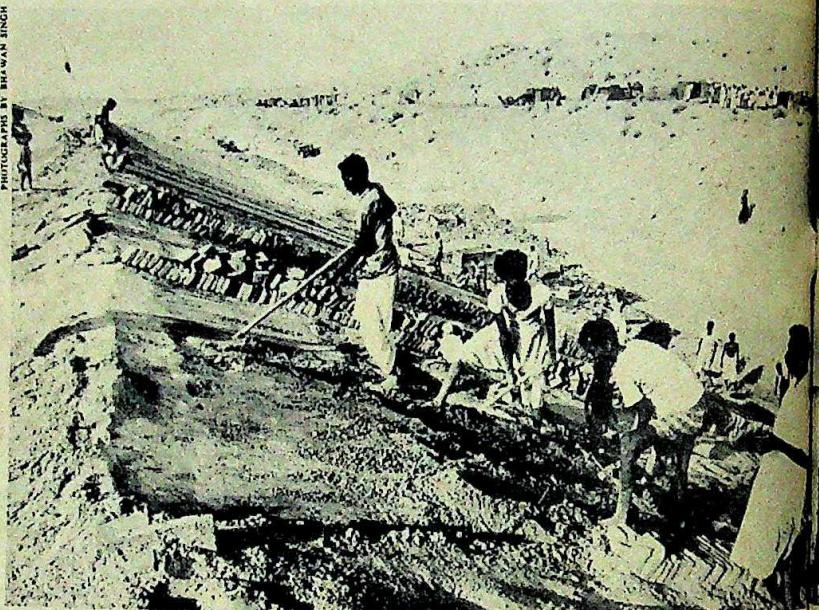
Original plans drawn up by Kanwar Sain had provision for directing all canal water to its right bank, alongside the border with Pakistan, taking advantage of the topography—a gentle slope towards the border which would facilitate simple gravity irrigation. In 1963, Sain revised his plan—taking into account the extremely sparse population on that side of the route—to allow for irrigating 1.7 lakh hectares on the canal's left bank with a series of lift canals. In 1970, however, the lift canal idea was dropped altogether and it was decided to irrigate all 6.09 lakh hectares of the CCA on the canal's right side by gravity flow.

**Shifting Priorities:** In 1974, the National Commission on Agriculture, in a desert development report, strongly advised against concentrating too much irrigation on the canal's right side. Geologists had also warned that the rocky substratum on that side would either lead to eventual waterlogging and salinity, or wasteful running-off of water towards the border. The commission recommended that the canal's water be brought to the more thickly populated and better developed flat-lands in six drought-prone districts on its left side.

After intensive surveys, in

1976 the Government decided to irrigate 2.6 lakh hectares on the canal's left side, as the commission had suggested, with five lift canals, cutting down the CCA on the right side to only 3.5 lakh hectares. For no conceivable reason, however, this plan was vetoed by the Janata government in 1978—and revived yet again last fortnight in an interminable saga. Sain acknowledges, however, that lift canals will raise costs steeply. A minimum of 108 mw of electricity is required to lift the water in stages up ascending gradients; this is quite a problem as

makeshift chimneys of brick kilns that out tiles for the canal's sides and floor. Such logistics have encouraged rampant corruption. Hundreds of 'reacher' 2,500 ft each have been contracted out; each contractor is given four months to complete his work. Almost everywhere, however, work is progressing patchily and behind schedule. In collusion with some engineers, contractors have poorly compressed the soil along the canal's sides; bricks manufactured in canalside kilns are so poor in quality that cracks are showing up in many spouts.



A contractor supervises brick-laying near Bikampur: shoddy workmanship

Rajasthan is currently passing through an acute power famine.

**M**ORE than 28,000 workmen are currently at work on the canal; this year alone, consumption of raw material is estimated at 1.27 tonnes of coal and 87,000 tonnes of cement. All along the canal route the bleak skyline is spiked by the

Since thousands of bags of cement have been quietly siphoned off, lining work has been completed with weak mortar. "Government-controlled cement rates are around Rs 49 a bag," says Jaisalmer lawyer Kishan Singh Bhati, "but here we can buy loads of cement stolen from the canal for little as Rs 20 a bag." Adds Ram Kumar Dass, who represented Kanwar Sain's constituency, near Bikaner, "It is also responsible for the Janata regime: 'Both banks of the canal breached recently at Bajju, 65 km from Bikaner, because they couldn't even withstand low water flow.' Says a placard: 'Chief Engineer Kashyap, your disruption is an inevitable phenomenon in such a large project.' Kashyap admits that all points the floor levels of the developed areas have been so shoddily constructed that water frequently flows towards the sand-dunes."

**Ecology Threatened:** the uses to which the canal



Kanwar Sain (left) and Canal Minister Baid: distant dream

...to ignore ecological warnings that agriculture would loosen and erode soil and precarious topsoil that supports extensive grassland. ...and 60 per cent of the area irrigated by ...consists of excellent grazing land." Narendra Singh Bhati. "The sewer which grows wild there has been found to have great nutritive value and hardiness." Although agriculture has wrought remarkable changes in the earliest reaches of Ganganagar district, more than

Digitized by Arya Samaj Foundation Chennai and eGangotri  
command area of 3.8 lakh hectares; but even here the ultimate potential is as much as 4.18 lakh hectares. Between Kilometres 74 and 189 --comprising the second phase of Stage I--CADA has run up against very tough obstacles, consisting of high sand-dunes and uneven ground.

Land in Stage I was allocated to 75,000 families. "Almost 98 per cent of these families come from other regions," says Ram Lubhaya, additional development commissioner with CADA. "But each allottee is expected to level his land—an average per-family

During the last kharif season, farmers in the fully developed areas below Kilometre 74 grew cash crops like cotton, clusterbean, sugar-cane, and groundnut on 1.9 lakh hectares, and wheat, gram, rape and mustard on 2.35 lakh hectares in the rabi season. Garhsana, 120 km from Bikaner, is a typical newly-prosperous CADA-developed mandi. In a matter of three years, Garhsana already possesses a telephone exchange, a school, a medical centre and a thriving grain market. Land in the mandi is selling for as much as Rs 1,500 a square yard, and there are two video parlours which show the latest Hindi movies.

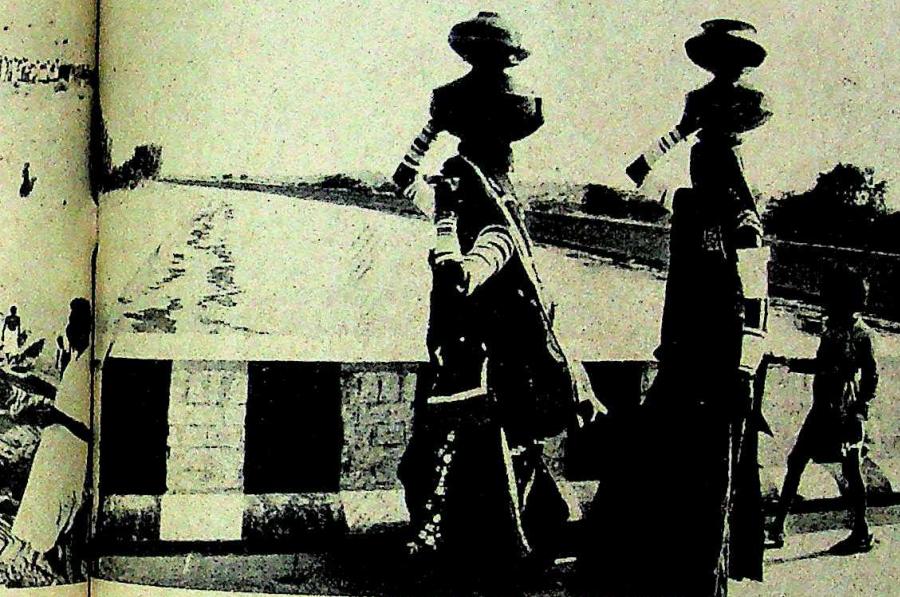
**Bad Planning:** The difficulties being encountered by CADA in developing the command area only illustrate the lopsided planning that has always plagued the canal project. Far away from Garhsana, near Mohangarh, a gang of workmen operates a huge earth-mover that is slowly digging into the tough sandy wastes. Says Foreman Harbans Singh: "If we could dampen the earth before excavating it our work would speed up immeasurably. But water supply through pipes has only recently reached Nachana, 65 km away, and here we are, roasting in this heat in our corrugated-iron trailer camps, waiting for the water, which will come after we have wasted so much time digging into the sandy soil."

"It is a crime against the nation to delay such an important project," says opposition leader Bhairon Singh Shekhawat in Jaipur. "The December 1981 river waters agreement between Rajasthan, Punjab and Haryana gave Punjab all the water that was not being utilised by the Rajasthan Canal. If there is a settlement with the Akalis by the Centre, our fear is that Punjab will prove very difficult about releasing our full quota from the Harike Pattan Barrage."

Rajasthan has been reeling from drought for the last five years; if the canal had been completed on schedule, much of the suffering caused by famine could have been avoided. Already this year, the Rajasthan Government plans to spend Rs 160 crore on famine relief. More than 50,000 people have fled the desert districts to neighbouring states with their cattle, and more than 120 people have died because of scarcity-induced conditions like broncho-pneumonia, measles, gastroenteritis and respiratory-tract infections.

These victims will never experience the canal's bounty. Oblivious of the urgency of the situation, the Rajasthan Canal grinds at an excruciatingly slow pace towards completion, a project that will bear fruit—if at all—only by the end of this century, a miracle of procrastination and criminal neglect.

— CHAITANYA KALBAG



A completed section of the canal: slow progress

allotment of 25 bighas or 6.25 hectares —himself, and to dig irrigation channels to take water from the canal outlets to his fields. Most of the allottees have not been able to do so because of their poverty. A pucca water course costs as much as Rs 5,680 per hectare to build."

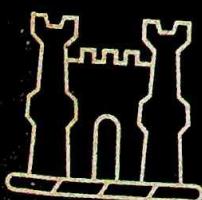
**Poor Irrigation:** Utilisation of the canal water, therefore, has been abysmal beyond Kilometre 74, in the second phase of Stage I, where only 0.34 lakh hectares have been irrigated out of an ultimate potential of 1.68 lakh hectares. In Stage II, irrigation has reached an infinitesimal 0.032 lakh hectares against an ultimate potential of 6.7 lakh hectares; 3,000 refugee families displaced by the 1971 war were allotted land in this stretch, but not one of them, says Lubhaya, has so far been able to take up agriculture. As a result of these adversities, and despite World Food Programme assistance worth Rs 13 crore to provide free wheat, pulses and cooking oil to 30,000 settler families over a five-year period, many families have deserted their allotments in desperation.

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**Developed Areas:** This year, however, with very adverse terrain, CADA will be doing more than a third of its budget of work on afforestation in order to stabilise sand-dunes. Only until Kilometre 74 has CADA successfully developed the

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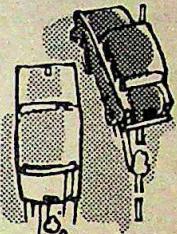
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## The Rash Overtaker:

Perhaps, he's in a hurry. Or, maybe, he likes the thrill of speed. If he tries to overtake you, do not hinder him. Let him pass—the sooner the better.



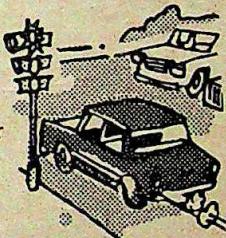
## The Centre-line Crosser:

He is in the approaching car that veers across the centre-line right in the path of your car. Maybe he misjudged his overtaking distance. Maybe he didn't slow down at a curve. Or perhaps he was just drowsy.

Tap your horn or flick your lights and move over to the left.

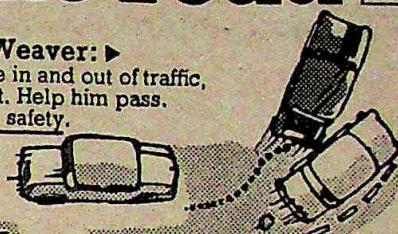
## The Amber Gambler:

Despite the amber signal he'll increase speed to beat his red light. Just as you move out to your green. Look both ways and be sure the other driver yields right of way. When in doubt, wait or slow down.



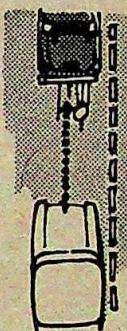
## The Lane Weaver:

He will weave in and out of traffic, get in, get out. Help him pass. For your own safety.



## The Sudden Braker:

At 60 km. p.h. he will slam his brakes. Without warning. Watch him carefully, especially his brake lights. To avoid an accident, keep at least one car length behind him for every 15 km. p.h. speed. Double the distance at night or when the road is wet.



## The Trick Cyclist:

He seems to suddenly move into your lane from nowhere. He may be playing tricks as he clings on to a moving lorry and sways ahead of you. Leave him to his tricks, slow down and be prepared to stop.



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J&amp;K ELECTIONS

# Eighty Or One Thousand?



THE Jammu & Kashmir assembly elections in early June turned out to be one of the most bitterly contested in recent memory. But what soured the electioneering was not so much the blatant communal twist given by both the major contestants but the inaccurate and misleading reportage by the national media. ARUN SHOURIE, who spent five weeks in the state before, during and after the elections, was in a unique position to comment on the press coverage, since he observed on the ground what was being distorted and disseminated in the national press. His report:

**“J-K** ELECTIONEERING ends amid blood, thunder” — that was the three-column headline of the lead news story in the *Indian Express* of June 4.

Both the headline and the story were typical: the headline encapsulated the coverage of the election campaign by the “national” press; and the narrative which extended over 17 column inches far, for instance, from providing even an estimate of the numbers killed or injured, did not so much as mention a single specific incident of violence. The nearest it got to specifics was an allusion to what it called “the shame of Anantnag”.

I had heard about the sham that elections in Kashmir used to be, what with candidates being ruled out wholesale by the simple device of rejecting their nomination papers. I had heard about how it was only in 1971 that the people of the valley had got a taste of what could be done through the ballot-box, that was when Shamim Ahmed Shamim had routed Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed for the Lok Sabha. And how it was only in 1977 that the first free and fair general elections had taken place to the Assembly. It was thus a discouraging history.

Polling was scheduled for June 5. From June 2 onwards I was at Kokernag, a small and lovely place in Anantnag district. Mrs Gandhi had just been there to address a meeting and to have lunch. From this little perch things seemed very reassuring on the whole. To be sure there was much to discourage one: the double-faced propaganda of the Congress(I), the futile hectoring of the BJP, as also much of what the National Conference (NC) was doing and saying — its alliance with Mirwaiz Farooq was as retrograde a step as any, its assertion that it would take Kashmir-Centre relations back to 1953 sounded to me like the Anandpur Sahib resolution in Urdu. And in any case God alone knew which of them was sincere in what he was saying. He alone knew who would be with whom tomorrow.

But even in all this, gains were evident: the NC was stepping out of the valley and, getting a good response in Jammu; a party other than the NC — the Congress(I) — was entering the valley; the Mirwaiz's call for a plebiscite had been swiftly repudiated and buried.... And in any case, there was the conduct and awareness of the ordinary villager that made up for everything. In Kokernag, on all accounts, both the Congress(I) and the NC candidates had worked hard

for the good of the people in the area; both had waged an intense, dignified campaign; the voters seemed to know each of the contenders well.

Posters, flags and bunting of both parties could be seen everywhere — but they were not plastered and slogans had not been spray-painted red on the walls, the way we see them in Delhi and elsewhere, instead of lending an air of combat, the flags, bunting, even the posters, had an air of festivity. By June 4, everyone we had been in touch with told us that the next day we would have to manage on our own as we would all be busy with polling. Many left for distant villages where they were registered as voters.

The only jarring element was the arrival, late in the afternoon of June 4, of a host of CRPF and BSF men — their presence seemed such an intrusion, it was so intimidating as it seemed so unnecessary in the peaceful surroundings. The shops, like everything else, remained closed on June 5 and throughout the day no one would talk of anything but the polling — of the long lines in the village, of polling in the constituency, of what had been heard about polling in other areas.

And when the results started coming first over the radio, then over the wireless and then (always later) over the “All-India” news bulletins, they call what others call the *Indian Express*, I was doubly impressed: the most ordinary persons, persons whom one would not even suspect were literate, were in fact keeping a sharp, detailed and meticulous tally — which candidate had won where by how much, who

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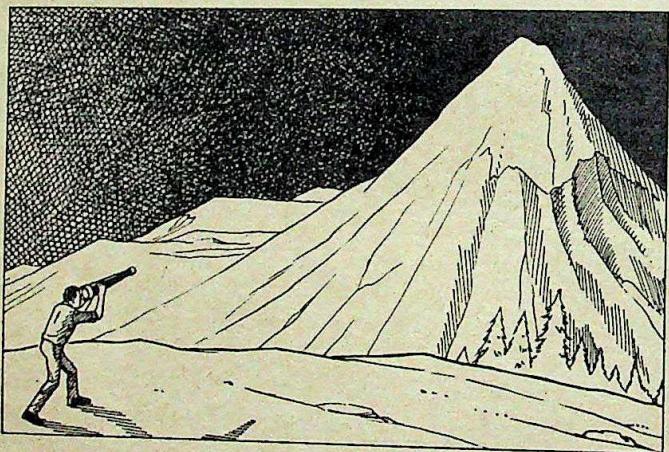
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victors and who were Farooq Abdullah's; they knew, and put up with much flourish, what defeat in one constituency meant for Mr Sayeed, the Congress(I) chief in the state, and later, what defeat in both the constituencies from which he had stood meant for him in the Congress(I). Late in the evening, little children and women went out processions setting the victories to song. There was neither sullen nor rancour. All that seemed to have happened was that of good candidates, one had won.

On the other side were the newspapers with their “blood and thunder,” and much else. As it is always possible to lose oneself in the cool'th of a well and to thus miss the fire that has raged all around, we have now read the “national” dailies. I am left no wiser about the elections, but quite a bit wiser about the press.

The principal impression that the newspapers of May and June convey is that the Jammu & Kashmir elections — the campaign as well as the polling — have been among the bloodiest and most violent that we have had. The most dramatic incidents were three: the fire-bombing of the Srinagar headquarters of the Congress(I); the violence attended a procession of 150 to 350 vehicles (you'll see the pictures in the paper) that wide range in a moment) that the NC took through several villages along a 52-km route; and the violence at Mrs Gandhi's meeting in Srinagar's Iqbal Park.

Oddly enough, there are coincidences here of the kind that the Government draws attention to. The Congress(I) headquarters



on May 19. Mrs Gandhi began her first election tour of J&K on May 21. The violence at the vehicles' rally took place on May 21. Mrs Gandhi began her second election tour on May 30. In fact, therefore, her tours began against the backdrop of dramatic incidents. And as the meeting at Iqbal Park on June 3 was the concluding meeting of the Congress(I) campaign, the violence there ended Mrs Gandhi's campaign on a dramatic note too.

In addition to these three, the press reported a dozen other incidents. These incidents—and of course the three major ones—got prominent display in the papers, with up to three-column headings on the front pages: "Violence spreads in Kashmir: 1 killed, 300 hurt", "Kashmir in PM's wake: 100 injured", "Violence spreads in J&K areas on eve of PM's visit".

### Conflicting numbers

The cumulative impression that the reports convey is of a state of violence and terror. But consider the specifics. What do the papers say, for instance, about how many were injured in the major incidents? Here are just a few illustrations:

On June 12, Srinagar and Chadura: *Indian Express*: "at least 55";

"about 100"; (by the next day, UNI had raised its figure to 130);

"at least 100"; records of the police and the hospitals show that

100 persons and 10 policemen were hurt.

On June 13, Charar-i-Sharif: *Indian Express*: 20; UNI: 35;

On June 29: along the 52 km

procession of about

100 persons: "Over 100";

On June 30: "Over 100 (but see below);

On June 31: "All-India

others call it

I was doubtful

Srinagar's Iqbal Park: "most ordinary

incidents" *Hindustan Times*: "a number of

incidents"; *Hindustan Times*: "half a dozen" plus four

more; *Indian Express*: "over 100"; UNI, PTI: "Over

100"; *Statesman*: 300.

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instructive. On the authority of its correspondent who, it

had noted, had accompanied the rally, PTI affirmed that 100

"zero zero," it said—had been hurt in violence along the route.

On June 30, from Srinagar the same agency put out another story

on the same rally in which it said that 1,000—"one zero zero

had been injured.

the two-column headline in the *Tribune* on May 31:

"Kashmir in poll violence." Other users were catholic. On May 30,

the *Indian Express* simultaneously reported its own estimate that "over 80" had been injured in the rally, as well as the UNI estimate that 300 had been injured, using the latter and not its own estimate in the heading. The *Statesman* and *Times of India*, having on May 30 reported that 300 had been injured in the rally, on May 31 reported that 1,000 had been injured in it!

The most disturbing feature, however, is another one. For the duration of the election period, the Government had instituted a special press briefing that was held at 6.30 p.m. every day. Several officers attended it, headed by G.M. Naik, commissioner of Kashmir Division, and M.N. Sabharwal, DIG, Kashmir. As the figures being put out by the press were at very great variance with the information received by them from the hospitals and their field staff, as the press figures were certain to alarm the people and thus foment tension, on each occasion that such figures were published—"300", "1,000", "80 houses burnt"—the officers requested the pressmen to educate them about the basis of the figures. Embarrassed silence is all the pressmen offered in return. On no occasion were the pressmen able to substantiate any one of their figures.

Yet they remained undeterred: "700 injured, shoot at sight orders" the papers reported again on June 14, using PTI copy. UNI had reported 250 injured and no shoot at sight orders, but, true to

pattern, the papers used the dispatch with the higher figure. Once again, pressmen were unable the next day to suggest what the basis of their estimates was. (The last account I have of the request being made to the pressmen and their being unable to substantiate any of their numbers is of their meeting with Education Minister Mohammed Shafi, on June 30, a month after the incidents).

The instances can be multiplied. But three facts stand out:

► The numbers dished out by the papers themselves cover an embarrassingly wide range: 80 versus 1,000, 10 versus 300 etc.

► Almost to the man, the correspondents did most of their estimating from Srinagar alone; unfortunately, as we shall see in a moment, the reports even about incidents that took place in Srinagar itself contain holes, ambiguities, contradictions and vast discrepancies.

► Let us assume that the police figures were perverse underestimates in each instance; but to show the lie in them, the press must be able to substantiate the much higher figures that it published. The pressmen were not able to do so when they were asked immediately after the publication of their reports; they have not been able to do so till now.

And if you analyse any specific incident, you notice the appalling inadequacies, discrepancies and worse. A single illustration will suffice, that of the most dramatic event of the campaign.

### The fire

On May 19, beginning around 3.45-4 p.m., the attic of the Congress(I) headquarters in Srinagar was destroyed by fire. The building is located on one of the most prominent and busy roads in Srinagar. It is within a stone's throw of newspaper offices and other places (like the Directorate of Information's offices) that newsmen frequent. The building itself is about a hundred feet from the road and is shielded by a wall of about 6 ft. There is one gate—a metal one with

spikes at the top—and a small door next to it. The rear of the building is flush with a lane that is about 14 ft wide. The building walls are of brick. The conventional slanting roof was of wood, shingles and metal. It jutted over the walls. Inside the attic were portions of brick and wood.

Trouble started around 10 a.m. when supporters of the NC objected to Congress(I) men putting flags and posters in a market that is the stronghold of the former. Workers in the Congress(I) jeeps were stoned. They returned to their party office. Around 12.30 p.m. they emerged, parked three jeeps across one lane of the road and sat in a dharna across the other lane. Traffic on this road—one of the busiest in Srinagar—was brought to a complete halt. A crowd gathered, among them NC men. Arguments, rival slogans ensued.

Stones were thrown at the Congressmen. They went back inside the compound of the building. They locked the door and gate and put a jeep across the gate. The stoning continued. The police intervened and cordoned off the compound and the building. Many of the Congressmen took refuge in the building. They locked the doors and windows from inside. Several of them continued to remain in the compound and hurl the stones back across the 6 ft brick wall.

compound and hurl the stones back across the 6 ft thick wall.

Around 3.45 p.m. to 4 p.m. a fire started in the attic. Six fire tenders arrived. They had some initial difficulty in getting in because the gate had been locked from inside, because of the jeep that had been put across it to block it and because of the incessant stoning from all sides. Within a few minutes, however, under the protection of shields, the firemen and the police removed the jeep, got through the gate and eventually put out the fire. By this time, extensive damage had been done to the building. Officials claimed that the fire could have been put out swiftly but for the obstacles that had been put in the way by Congressmen.

In the evening Mohammed Shafi Qureshi, the Congress(I) candidate from Srinagar, and other Congressmen held a press conference in the compound of the building. They accused NC men of setting the fire by hurling burning rags and torches from the front and the rear of the building. The NC in turn accused Congressmen of setting the fire themselves.

Surely, the fire was a major event. It was the lead story in every Delhi paper the next morning. The trouble had started in the forenoon, hence there was a good deal of time in which to observe what was happening and put the facts together. And, as I noted, the building is in the most accessible part of town, right in front of newspaper offices. In any event, there were days and days after May 19 when a reconstruction could have been attempted. This had been, after all, among the most dramatic events of the campaign.

No "national" paper gave the reader much idea of the layout of the building, its compound, its distance from the road. No paper explained how burning rags or torches travelled a hundred feet across the front compound. Or had the NC men jumped over the 6 ft wall, stormed across the compound where there were, on one estimate, over 200 Congressmen, and then lobbed the burning rags and torches?

Had they, in fact, got not just into the compound but into the building itself and set fire to it from within? While many of the Congressmen were returning from the compound the stones that were being hurled at them, several had taken refuge in the building and bolted the doors from inside. The doors, even the window panes are still intact. So, was entry forced? If so, how? Did a Judas open some

Chennai and eGangotri

Here is the PTI dispatch, put out from Srinagar about 45 minutes before the fire commenced:

"The policemen cordoned the headquarter seen persuading the attackers to disperse."

And here is the PTI dispatch put out from Srinagar half an hour ago:

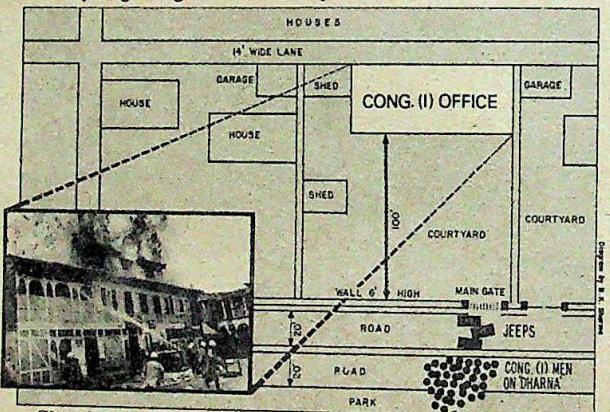
"The National Conference supporters were resisted by C.P.I. workers when they tried to force entry into the building. The police had to retreat."

And here is the UNI dispatch:

"Police intervened and tried to disperse the two groups.... Supporters of the National Conference made several attempts to attack the PCC(I) office. However the police prevented them and chased them away."

So did they enter the compound or not? Did they storm the building or not? If they did not, then the fire could only have been those "burning rags and torches". If we take it that these were from the front, we have to explain how they flew a hundred to reach the building.

If the rags and torches were hurled from the rear, the question was whether or not access to the back lane had been gained.



**Sketch map of Congress(I)'s Srinagar office set on fire on May 19: doubtful issues**

testifies to definitely seeing the burning rags and torches being  
Almost all rely in this matter on the assertions of Qureshi and  
Far from examining any of these matters—that day or on  
subsequent occasion—the reports are vague, contradictory—  
vital matters—dangerously tendentious.

Where did Qureshi and others sit in dharna? UNI alone correctly that they staged a dharna in the middle of the road, blocked all traffic. PTI, as well as the papers, glossed this fact of evasion: they sat outside their party headquarters! The vehicle, say, were "parked at the gate of the building"!

How long did the battle last? Two hours, says Statesman, says PTI; four, say Indian Express, Times of India, UNI.

How many Congressmen were inside the compound building (remember that they had met the press after the fire) says one; 200, says another.

What did the police do? Here is the *Indian Express* version.

"Some eyewitnesses alleged that the attackers were helped by the police... Fire brigade tenders (and this part of the report is definite, there is no reliance on eyewitnesses now) were on the scene about 25 minutes after the fire started. However, they were directed by the police to stop 200 yards from the gate of Congress(I) headquarters and were not allowed to proceed further..." Was such an order given or is it a conjecture?"

"The fire which started around 15:30 hours was brought under control at 17:30 hours.

The fire which started around 15:30 hours was  
an Express.

the doors closed within 45 minutes. Over half a dozen fire tenders were present to prevent the fire from spreading to adjoining buildings. There was no hint of the fire tenders being ordered to stop. As for the witnesses said about the role of the police, first, here are successive PTI dispatches filed over the course of the afternoon and evening; notice how they change:

"The policemen cordoned the headquarters building and were demanding the attackers to disperse.... The building was set on fire despite the presence of a strong police force.... Hundreds of National Conference supporters were still besieging the headquarters.... The police has so far not used force to disperse them.... The police arrived in force on the scene when the attack began and controlled off the area but used no force to disperse the crowd and eight of hundreds of passersby looked on.... Even when the two groups clashed, police did not intervene to separate them."

"...of confirmation and a bit of refutation, isn't there? And the UNI account of what the police did:

"...Congress(I) workers came out of the PCC(I) office and started the Srinagar-Jammu National Highway in front of their office and would not allow traffic to pass. Meanwhile, a large group of workers came to the scene and shouted anti-Congress slogans. Police intervened

"...to disperse the two groups. Later, additional police force arrived and cleared away the unruly mob. No paper says this. Neither do they say that how burning of the roof or the stuck long rather than part been done etc? Had some been used inflammatory in the extreme. A PTI passage put out half after the fire commenced: the fate of over 100 Congress workers who included the Union minister, Mr

Shafi Qureshi, party candidate from the Srinagar Lok Sabha constituency, trapped inside the building was not immediately known."

"Everyone came out of the building when the fire began. He held a press conference in the building compound soon after the fire was put out. What effect would such a passage have on a reading the paper the next morning? Guess whether it made it papers?"

"There is another passage from PTI used among others by the Tribune and the Indian Express, Chandigarh. There was fresh trouble in the evening when flag waving workers of the National Conference headed by Dr Farooq Abdullah, minister, marched towards the partially gutted Congress(I) office. Police caned charged and dispersed them."

"Farooq Abdullah was out of Srinagar that day. The NC issued an denial the next morning. PTI put it on record. I leave it as an exercise to find out which papers that had used the dispatch bothered to clarify the matter.

"But that was just poor grammar—not that the marching led by Farooq but that the workers belonged to the NC led by Farooq.... Poor grammar or tendentious grammar?

### One instance

"...was the fire the end of the matter. On May 31 the lead story in the Indian Express under a three-column headline was: "EC asks

Chaturvedi to rush to Kashmir, concern over poll violence." It went to some length to say how the discrepancies between the reports on law and order sent by the Chief Secretary of the State, Noor Mohammed, and those filed by the press had led the Election Commission to ask the Union home secretary to rush to Kashmir.

"On May 31 itself, the home secretary said that in his view the violence had been over played. While there certainly was tension, he said, "I think there is more apprehension that there will be violence than actual violence so far." He also said (and all this is reported in the Telegraph of June 1) that he was "fully satisfied with the state Government's assurances that they will be able to conduct a free and fair poll". If they wanted more central forces, these would be provided.

"But the Delhi press continued with its stories. Thus on June 2, the Indian Express under the heading: "More central forces for Kashmir" informed its readers thus:

"The Centre is sending some more central forces, both from the CRPF and the BSF, to Jammu and Kashmir to ensure fair and peaceful conduct of elections in the state.... The forces are being sent following Union Home Secretary T.N. Chaturvedi's assessment in the state.... The central forces being sent to J & K are those withdrawn from Assam. This indicates the seriousness of the situation in Jammu and Kashmir. Some of the forces have already come back from Assam while some more are expected on Thursday."

"There was no such move at all. A press release of the Election Commission issued on June 2 itself, that is on the very afternoon on which the Indian Express report appeared, confirms this. The PTI dispatch summarising the release says that after receiving Chaturvedi's report "Mr Trivedi (the chief election commissioner) expressed the view that the central police forces assigned to the state are adequate..."

"The dispatch also said: "After hearing Mr Chaturvedi's assessment, Mr Trivedi said some of the press reports about incidents of violence in the state were found to be exaggerated. The state Government had by and large taken adequate measures to maintain law and order."

"The Indian Express which had flashed the news of Chaturvedi's visit to Kashmir as the three-column lead story on May 31, used this assessment of his findings as the last para of a six-para report on page 7 on June 3. The next day the paper led the front page, with three-column banner headline: "J-K electioneering ends amid blood, thunder." If you had persevered to page 7 of the same issue, you'd have discovered the report that the three Central observers sent by the Election Commission from Delhi felt that the situation in the state was normal.

"Reign of terror in Kashmir, says Rajiv"—that was the lead story in Statesman on May 28. "People being butchered in J-K and W. Bengal," the papers reported C.M. Stephen as saying. They did not report, certainly not with any comparable prominence, even by way of recapitulation after the tumult had died down, how many, for instance, had in fact died in the entire valley in all the clashes put together.

"Three had died: one supporter of the Congress(I), one of the People's Conference, one of the NC. Even one death is too many. But a press that, by its reports, had built up an impression of large-scale violence; that had, day in and day out, purveyed allegations of "an Assam-like situation being created in Kashmir", of "a reign of ter-



Statesman found the number '300' auspicious

"ror", of people being "butchered", should at least have returned to give the final count.

### Less than responsible

"But what can a newspaper do?" the pressmen ask. "If Rajiv says there is a reign of terror, that is news and we have to report it." But, first, as I have just recounted, the press did more, much more than merely purvey other people's allegations. It purveyed "facts" of its own making. Moreover, is purveying allegations the job of the press? Is purveying allegations and letting things rest at that the limit of its job?

In the law of defamation, for instance, it is clearly the principle that you cannot publish material defaming a person and then give as your alibi the excuse that you did so simply because X or Y said so. You are liable for what you publish. More than legal liability, the sheerest sense of responsibility would require that you examine the facts before purveying the allegations and even then you'd report them only if the public interest were involved.

Here, when, going by the testimony of the press, passions had been aroused, purveying wild allegations could certainly have the consequence of adding to bitterness, of aggravating prejudice and passion between communities and regions, in short of inflaming the situation. And yet, the press swallowed and vomited allegation after allegation. Why should the norm on matters affecting the entire community be so much more lax than on the defamation of an individual?

Even at the best of times, such an attitude—"If Rajiv says there is terror, that is news and we have to report it"—is less than responsible. But in trying times like ours when politicians lie left, right and centre, when they think of nothing but the advantage of the moment, when at least one set—the Congress(I)—has been going about this business of allegations in an unrelenting and systematic manner, the result of the stance that it must purvey the allegations because they are news is that the press becomes a megaphone for falsehood.

Consider the allegations that are being made day in and day out by Kamalapati Tripathi, Arun Nehru, that recent reconvert K.C. Pant and others—allegations about wholesale rigging, allegations that the press has been dutifully reproducing. There are several features of the allegations that should have cautioned the press:

- The allegations are being made systematically, by one "leader" after another, from one platform after another, one day after another, all as part of a well-orchestrated campaign;
- These sundry "leaders" have not thus far been giving out specific facts to substantiate what they are saying;
- Often the few specific things they say are easily seen to be false; instead of being used where they were needed, says Arun Nehru, CRPF and BSF men were sent off to Damchuk in Ladakh, a hamlet that has only four voters; none were in fact sent;

► The decibel level as well as the frequency of allegations have mounted as the days have gone by, especially since the results came out; right from mid-May to the eve of polling, official after official of the Election Commission itself, for instance, was certifying that all the arrangements necessary for a free and fair poll had been made. These and other factors should have led the press to examine the allegations that others were using it to purvey. They did not.

Let us for a moment assume that there were malpractices on as large a scale as alleged by the Congress(I). If it is eventually establis-

hed that either the National Conference or the Congress(I) in sorted to malpractices, it would be quite independently of what "national" papers have reported: there is not a single instance they have documented adequately, not one.

Instead, having repeated the allegations often enough, the Indian Express published three weeks after the elections on July 1, "the ruling National Conference has not been able to improve its political strength as a result of the recent state assembly elections. The analysis appears under the four-column heading, "Congress real victor in Kashmir poll."

Here is how it reports the fact that Farooq Abdullah won, getting 80 per cent of the votes, no less—"The Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah, polled much less number of votes than did his party men. In Ganderbal, he polled only 32,331 votes out of electorate of 39,764. Mr G.M. Salathi, his Congress(I) rival, 1,235. But this too was much more than the percentage of polled by late Sheikh Abdullah in the same constituency, a strange way to record the fact that the man got 80 per cent of votes polled and that he got more than Sheikh Abdullah himself, strange but, if I may say so, predictable.

### One allegation

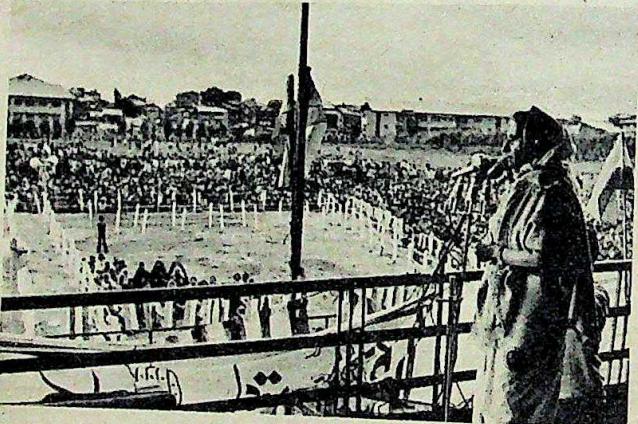
There is not the space to mine the allegations in detail. Of the central ones, the *India Today* says the *Indian Express*, that is three, and the *Times of India* around the point here is that there would be more in booth capitals.

The papers have swallowed and purveyed again and again, without the slightest shame, the allegation of the Election Commission—made in instance through its secretary Bhalla—that while, given the deteriorating law and order situation, the Election Commission had asked for 32 battalions of CRPF and BSF to the J & K Government for duty, these were not deployed where they were needed, that these battalions were packed off to Kargil and Leh; and the rest in effect kept sequestered in their barracks.

Here are facts as available in Srinagar:

- It was not at the initiative of the Election Commission that battalions were sent; it is the J & K Government that had asked them.
- The J & K Government had asked not for 32 battalions but for 39 battalions.
- 32 battalions were promised; they were to be available mid-May.
- In fact, till June 3 only 13 battalions and one company reached state; two and a half battalions arrived between June 4 and 5, and were little use.
- A company has a sanctioned strength of 133 men; allowing personnel on leave etc, it has a normal strength of about a hundred. The companies that arrived in J & K had as few as 54 men a company, thus against the estimated 30,000 men that the state had required around 7,000 actually came.

► By law all forces in an area work under a unified command of the local magistrate or the station house officer in charge of the area; the central forces were so deployed; BSF men carry only semi-automatic rifles etc and, as in this case, they were totally unfamiliar with the language, topography and other features of the people and the terrain.



local police were in the first instance used to deal with assemblies etc; the July 1980 episode when the sudden movement of central armed units had nearly set off an explosion was most in everyone's mind. Forces were extensively deployed; at the penultimate stage, it seemed to have been received from Delhi that the BSF units move around completely on their own; the BSF Inspector in Srinagar, O.P. Bhutani, and others felt that this might clash with the local police as had happened so recently in Assam, that it might unnecessarily provoke the people, would be a violation of the law and much else, that the July situation may be recreated; and so the senior personnel of the force bought time by pacifying the authorities in Delhi; for the as soon as the elections were over, O.P. Bhutani, was told to hand over charge to one of his juniors and proceed to Tripura. After much explaining he has managed to get a brief reprieve. six battalions being sent to Kargil and Leh; a battalion "striking companies", and one "headquarters" company; six were sent and not six battalions.

The point here is again that all these facts could have been obtained by papers did not bother to obtain them. They just purveyed the allegation. And, having purveyed the allegation often they pro-

to pronounce, taking the alibi: "Had the state administration used all the 32 battalions the central police supplied says the *Indian Express* on that is three weeks after that is three weeks after and deployed them around the polling stations, there would not have been a booth capturing...."

#### Reasons

Why did the press lend itself to Srinagar they point to lies and there is little that to manage news you influence—perhaps just by more prompt, more "helpful"—just a few individuals. Predictions there may have been but I am struck by evidence rather than of conspiracy.

The Kashmir case illustrates the problems of which we see evidence more and more every day. The press continues to rely on its "sources"; but the "sources" have changed; and the press has failed allowance for this change. The rulers are now more skilful, systematic and infinitely more resourceful in cultivating newsmongering. And they now have a clear conception of what they want the newsmen to convey.

Strategy is clear: as far as the region in which the choice is concerned, foment division, create insecurity and fear, steep the fear vote: as far as the rest of the country is concerned, events in the region to convince everyone elsewhere that separation, chaos are imminent and thus as they are the only available guarantees of order, continuity, stability, all, desperate for staying in power, should flock to them.

It is useful in that it helps convince people that disintegration is imminent, but useful only by a half: as you are in power, you hide the facts about the killings as they tarnish your image as a protector. Kashmir is doubly useful in that it helps convince that disintegration is imminent and, as someone else is in it reinforces your image as the only buffer against chaos: a violence gets you the fear vote in Jammu & Kashmir just as the rest of the country to rush to you tomorrow.

The press became an even handier instrument in Kashmir than it

normally is, as it did not make allowance for the fact that the political strategy of the rulers required that they create a scare. And we are not out of the problem as yet: as the rulers' need for the hysteria continues, in the coming months they will continue to manipulate the press in the precise manner in which they did during the election.

Nor did the press make allowance for the fact that the local facets of the Congress(I) had a compulsion of their own—a compulsion that has grown in view of the results—to make wild allegations. They had painted a rosy forecast to Mrs Gandhi: our party will get 10 if not 15 seats in the valley; and at least 25 in Jammu: among the NC victors in the valley will be 10 or 12 men of G.M. Shah—Farooq Abdullah's disgruntled brother-in-law; he'll break over and so we'll have a government of our own or at least one controlled by us....

It is this assessment which led Mrs Gandhi to commit so much of herself to the campaign. When large numbers did not turn up for the meetings, and specially when the results went awry alibis were imperative. Hence, the ever mounting allegations. But the press shut its eyes to the compulsion and merely purveyed the allegations.

#### Conclusions, Remedies

Many conclusions suggest themselves. Here are three:

- What we think of as "the Press" is just one or two or half a dozen individuals often over-extended, often with few facilities, often with commitments of different kinds;
- What is called the "national" press is just the regional, indeed the local press of Delhi, with all the parochialism of us *Delhiwallas*;
- The standing of the press is too high, its standards too low.

There is a specific remedy in the Kashmir case that the press owes us all. The editors of the principal papers as well as those who manage the news agencies should request their reporters to acquaint them with the basis of, say, the figures of killed and injured that they

put on the teleprinters. No hurdles of professional ethics can be invoked against such a study; no one is asking that the reporters reveal their sources etc to outsiders; they should merely substantiate their figures and that too only to their editors. The editors, having collectively assessed the bases and balance of the reports their papers carried, should reveal the conclusions to the public.

In this specific instance, I think that even this little exercise will go a long way. But the general problem remains and for that the principal remedy lies with the victims. If a person who is defamed does not hit back, if his friends do not at least bombard the editor with letters, if the people of Assam when misrepresented merely sit back to nurse their hurt in private; if the biggest victim of all—the reader—continues to buy papers for their resale value as *raddi* or for their classified ads or their matrimonial columns, then we'll all continue to get the press they deserve. So, the basic remedy is that the victim must be more active on his behalf. Injured innocence is not enough.

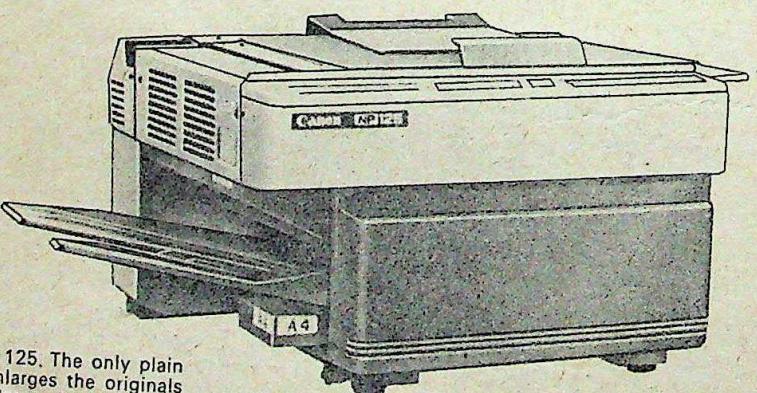
But there is one peculiarity about the press which ensures that even though the press is very much a part of the system that has to be reformed, there is something—even if it is a little bit—that can be done from within it. This peculiarity, as I was taught, is that the press is an infectious trade. If a few begin several others in it just have to follow suit—a little bit perhaps but at least that little bit.

For this reason, and having watched the great lacunae in what we do and its consequences, I am now converted to the view that the press should formulate a code of conduct—a code for pressmen to abide by or at least one that they may be measured against.



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# SRI LANKA Fundamental Issues



"THIS reminds me of the days of Hitler," said former prime minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike. "It's deplorable," commented Harry Jayawardene Q.C., president J.R. Jayawardene's brother and one of Sri Lanka's most eminent lawyers.

Judicial Service Officers Association, the students, the opposition parties, the Human Rights Movement, the working journalists union, the bishop of Colombo and municipal councils throughout Sri Lanka joined the swelling chorus of protest at a notorious incident which they described as the most grievous instance of contempt of court in the history of this country".

On Saturday morning, June 11, vandals of unidentified "demonstrators" arrived at the homes of three Supreme Court judges: Justice Percy Colin Thome, Justice G.L. and Justice Barnes Ratwatte (Mrs Bandaranaike's brother), and shouted threatening slogans and obscenities, leaving placards which clearly indicated their cause. One of the placards read: "Is it only one who has fundamental rights?" At two of the vehicles they came in had the markings of the state-owned transport corporation.

The Vivienne mentioned in the placards undoubtedly Vivienne Goonewardene, 51-year-old stalwart of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP). Her husband, Leslie Goonewardene, who died recently, was a leader of the LSSP and had gone underground in India when he broke out of jail during the war. He had participated in the "ugly struggles" of the Indian freedom movement, and was a cabinet minister in Bandaranaike's United Front government between '70 and '77. Vivienne Goonewardene herself had been an MP several times and deputy minister once.

**Violation:** Only 48 hours before the judgement, the three judges had ruled in favour of Goonewardene in a case filed by her as a sub-inspector of the Kollupitiya Police, which is in the heart of Colombo, just between the US Embassy and the High Commission. The charge against Goonewardene was that he had illegally arrested Goonewardene and treated her in a brutal and degrading manner, violating her fundamental rights. Goonewardene, who is president of a women's organisation, had demonstrated to the US Embassy, returning against that country's policies. On her back, she and some others, including

the wife of Communist Party leader Pieter Keuneman, had entered the police station to help a photographer who had been taken there. The cameraman, she claimed, had taken pictures of policemen snatching some of the banners carried by the processionists.

The three-member court asked the inspector general of police (IGP) to inquire into



Premadasa: prompt action

the allegation that Goonewardene had been abused and kicked in the station, and held that the arrest in the station was violation of a fundamental right. It also directed that the state pay a compensation of Rs 2,500 to the petitioner, Goonewardene. But 24 hours later, the Defence Ministry announced that the sub-inspector concerned, Ganeshanandan, had been promoted inspector.

In the public mind, the circumstances seemed suspiciously similar to an earlier case. During the controversial and fiercely-fought referendum campaign in December, an organisation called Pavidi Handa (voice of the clergy)—which comprises both Buddhist and Christian priests—had joined the referendum camp. After the referendum, a ranking Buddhist monk who is an official of Pavidi Handa filed a plaint in the Supreme Court alleging that an assistant superintendent of police (ASP) of Gampaha, 25 miles from Colombo, had violated his fundamental rights in not permitting him to hold a scheduled meeting, and by confiscating thousands of leaflets the organisation had intended to distribute. The court held the ASP guilty, and fined him Rs 25,000. Cabinet spokesman, Minister Ananda Tissa de Alwis

told the press after a Cabinet meeting that the Government would pay the fine. Days later the ASP was promoted to SP.

**Prompt Action:** Prime Minister Premadasa acted promptly after the June 11 incident. In the absence of President Jayawardene, who was on an official visit to Egypt, he ordered the IGP to institute a full inquiry and promised that the guilty would be brought to book. Chief Justice Neville Samarakoon then summoned a meeting of the entire Supreme Court. At the end of this meeting, the chief justice issued a statement which inter alia observed that the demonstration "appeared to be planned and coordinated". The statement added: "The judges feel that certain actions taken in recent times have been an incentive to the events of last Saturday. We need hardly add that such events will in no way deter us from being independent in discharging our duties."

Quoting Lord Denning of Great Britain, Justice Samarakoon said: "Nothing which is said or done by this person or that, nothing which is written by this pen or that, will deter us from doing what we believe is right."

Before the furore could subside, a young man, Lakshman Fernando marched into two newspaper offices with a statement in which he admitted "sole responsibility" for the demonstrations against the judges. He described himself as a "Colombo businessman". He was an accused in the 1971 insurgency trial and had been a district committee member of the People's Liberation Front (JVP) which had launched it. He was released under the general amnesty granted by the present UNP Government. He then became a UNP member.

**Mystery Man:** As embarrassed UNP stalwarts tried to dissociate themselves from the self-confessed "demonstrator", the *Sun* published a wedding photograph of Lakshman Fernando alias 'Kalu Lucky' (Black Lucky), his *nom de guerre* as a JVP Guerrist. In the picture were the attesting witnesses at the wedding, the minister of justice and the minister of education. As the Bar Association screamed for action by the attorney general, the mystery deepened. The police could not find 'Kalu Lucky', the Colombo businessman so profoundly disturbed about fundamental rights and Supreme Court rulings. But the press did, and the police confronted him with his published statement. Fernando said that the statement was drafted by his lawyers and he had nothing to add to it. The attorney general has submitted a report to the chief justice (July 2) and is awaiting his instructions. Meanwhile, an *Island* reporter had a scoop on July 4 when he wrote that 'Kalu Lucky' was facing trial in another case—for murder.

—MERVYN DE SILVA in Colombo

TOXIC WEAPONS



AS THE tempo of western criticism of Soviet actions in Afghanistan rose to a new pitch last fortnight, world attention began to focus again on American allegations that the Soviets have been systematically brutalising the Afghan countryside with chemical and biological weapons including the dreaded "yellow rain".

The use of toxic weapons that slowly and painfully bring their victims to gruesome ends is specifically forbidden by the 1972 Multilateral Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. The treaty prohibits the development, production, stockpiling of or transfer of such weapons. American accusations have met with angry and vehement denials by the Soviet Union. But there is now emerging a convincing body of evidence—and important parts of it from independent sources—that the Soviets may have direct complicity in the deployment of biological and chemical weapons not only in Afghanistan but also in Kampuchea and Laos. Many sceptics who had previously dismissed the American accusations as no more than science fiction or examples of Reaganite cold war rhetoric have now begun to take the issue seriously.

**Changing Views:** A recent example of this waning scepticism was an article in the weekly publication of the American Association for the Advancement of Science—the fiercely independent *Science Magazine*. It described the American case against the Soviet Union as persuasive and well established. In an earlier issue, the same magazine had termed the American charges premature.

The turnaround began after a recent United Nations investigation found that allegations concerning the use of harassing agents in Afghanistan and toxic materials in Laos were well supported by circumstantial evidence. The conclusions of the UN investigation appear to be wishy-washy and not definitive because the investigation was thwarted by the Soviet Union right from the start. But despite vigorous lobbying, the Soviets were unable to block the probe. The UN team of chemical warfare experts were, however, unable to gather onsite evidence because Afghanistan, Cambodia and Laos—all three countries are signatories to the multilateral treaty forbidding chemical warfare—refused them entry. The UN investigation centred on interviews with "yellow rain" victims who had taken refuge in neighbouring countries.

**Prolonged Controversy:** But the credibility of the US charges goes beyond the findings of the United Nations team. The accusations were made originally not by the fire-eating anti-communist Ronald Reagan but by the soft-on-Soviets detente-oriented Jimmy Carter. The controversy goes back to August 1980 when the State Department released a 124-page report alleging the use of chemical and toxin weapons in Afghanistan and South-east Asia. The following year the then secretary of state Haig and his under-secretary Walter Stoessel proclaimed in separate announcements that the United States had hard evidence that the Soviets were using lethal toxins in the region.

The American charges ticked on with clockwork regularity

# The Chemical Peril

throughout 1982. Many of them were backed with specific documentary evidence. For example, the State Department released a report on an analysis of victims of an alleged chemical attack in Kampuchea showing that several blood samples of victims indicated the presence of T2, a trichothecene poison.

In February, 1982, Max Kampelman, chief US delegate to the European Security Conference in Madrid charged the Soviet Union with operating chemical and biological weapons facilities in violation of international conventions. "It is unmistakable," Kampelman said, "that innocent people in Laos, Kampuchea and Afghanistan have been victims of lethal agents and potent mycotoxins of the trichothecene group."

**Physical Evidence:** The following month, the Americans went a step further. The United States charged that the Soviet Union had killed more than 3,000 people in Afghanistan with chemical weapons. According to State Department sources the evidence came from defectors, refugees, victims and doctors who treated them.

But it was not until November 1982 that the United States offered the first physical evidence to back up its allegations against the Soviet Union. Secretary of State George Shultz released a 12-page report providing additional toxicological evidence of the use of chemical weapons in Asia by the Soviet Union. He also produced two Soviet gas masks—obtained in Afghanistan in late 1981—that were contaminated with "yellow rain".

*There is now emerging a convincing body of evidence—and important parts of it from independent sources—that the Soviets may have direct complicity in the deployment of biological and chemical weapons not only in Afghanistan but also in Kampuchea and Laos.*

Those who disbelieve the Americans—and there are many—offer these arguments:

► Many eyewitness accounts emanate from unsophisticated sources. The physical evidence is based on a small number of samples from the field. Also, there is little information on where and under what conditions the samples of vegetation and blood were gathered or how they were shipped to the United States.

► Although trichothecene poisons have not been found on controlled samples of soil and vegetation from South-east Asia, sceptics assert that too little is yet known about the natural occurrence of these substances in the region.

► The Soviets would have a strong motivation to avoid biological warfare because of that country's desire to portray itself in the Third World and Europe as a responsible peace-loving power.

**B**UT THOSE who assert that the Soviets have used chemical and biological weapons note that the evidence already presented is comprehensive and convincing. As one independent American analyst put it: "The areas in which these weapons have reportedly been used are all highly remote, and the Soviets may have concluded that chemical and toxin warfare in these regions would go undetected. Soviet military planners may have felt that gas and toxin weapons would be particularly appropriate in battlefield conditions they or their allies faced in Afghanistan, Laos and Cambodia. Lightly armed guerrillas operating in rugged, forested terrain can be difficult to engage with conventional weapons. But gases and toxins offer the prospect of killing guerrilla troops that lack defensive equipment in their hiding places."

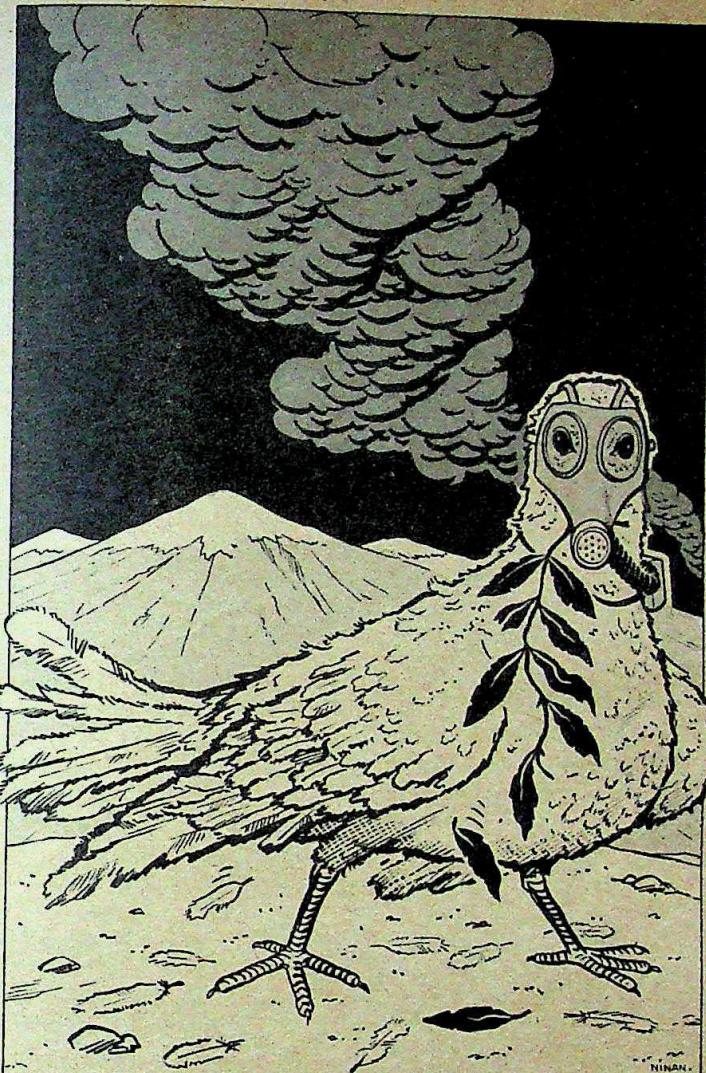
In addition, such weapons could probably be cost-effective in view of the declining Soviet economy in which the Kremlin is keeping a close watch on defence expenditures. According to a US analyst: "While many observers doubt that the Soviets may have learned many lessons for European theatres, some believe that the Soviets may have decided to test their chemical and biological warfare capabilities in preparation for possible deployment against NATO or Warsaw Pact troops."

**Denied Responsibility:** The Americans went to great lengths to deny responsibility. They argue that America's use of napalm and herbicides in Vietnam, combined with wind patterns in the region created the conditions for the spread of yellow rain in the region. But this has been termed "bizarre" by the world's leading authorities on Fusarium — fungi varieties of which include T2 Toxin.

While the direct involvement of the Soviets in chemical warfare in Afghanistan is not difficult to establish because of their exact nature of involvement in South-East Asia, the exact nature of their involvement in South-East Asia remains uncertain.

There have been sporadic reports of the presence of Soviet agents in Laos and Cambodia. And State Department sources declare — on the basis that the USSR has assisted chemical and toxin transfers to local allies who are capable of producing the weapons themselves. Vietnam may possibly be manufacturing small amounts of yellow rain through a fermentation process, but American intelligence sources doubt that this can be achieved without at least some Soviet assistance.

**Analysis:** Physical evidence, interviews with victims and doctors, as well as toxicological testing have led to the following conclusions according to an independent analysis recently given to the US Congress: The Soviets have used lethal chemical weapons in Afghanistan. These alleged poison gas attacks in Afghanistan have reportedly



**The United States charged that the Soviet Union had killed more than 3,000 people in Afghanistan with chemical weaponry. According to State Department sources the evidence came from defectors, refugees, victims and doctors who treated them.**

Showed that certain mycotoxins recovered from areas where yellow rain had been dropped could cause the symptoms.

Sources outside the US Government reached similar conclusions. An unofficial report from the Canadian Government to the United Nations supported the conclusions that the region had been subjected to mycotoxin attacks. A Philippine doctor who worked in Laotian refugee camps in Thailand concluded that "chemicals have been used against the Hmong intermittently since 1976."

been mounted in connection with battlefield operations, but civil law targets have evidently been hit during such operations. Soviet forces in Afghanistan have been observed to be equipped with chemical and biological warfare decontamination equipment, including a standard Soviet device making use of a jet engine for decontaminating tanks, and with gas masks."

► Gases as well as yellow rain have been used in both Laos and Kampuchea. In Kampuchea, these substances appear to have been employed primarily in a battlefield situation by Vietnamese troops and troops of the Vietnam-supported Kampuchean elements against the Khmer Rouge. "But there are also reports of poisoned food to civilians and of the poisoning of wells in Kampuchean refugee camps in Thailand."

► In Laos, in addition to battlefield uses by the troops of the Pathet Lao Government, there have been numerous reports of attacks with chemical and toxin weapons against villages — particularly the villages of the Hmong people in the remote highlands of central Laos. Some of these reports come from former Laotian pilots who have dispersed the toxic chemicals from the air.

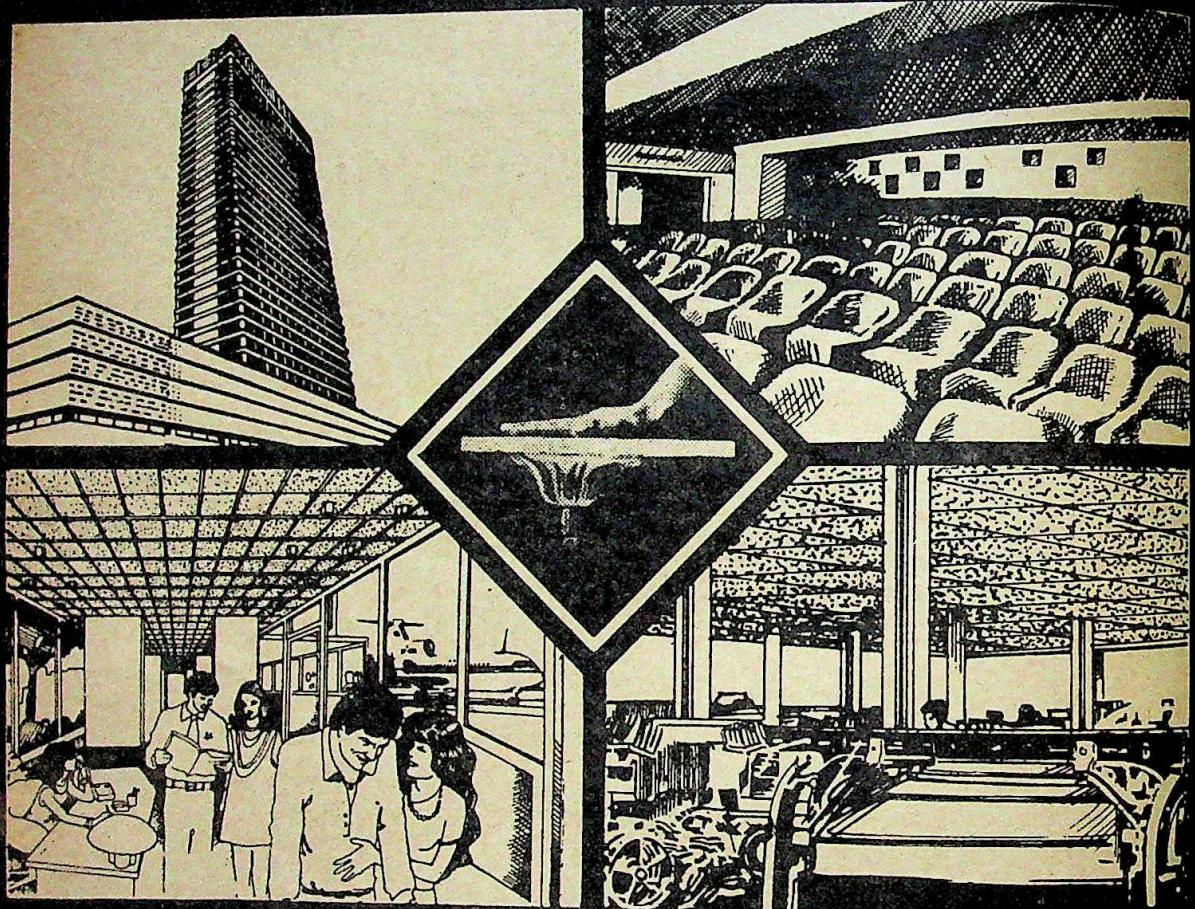
► Most of the yellow rain reports come from refugees who have referred to "a yellow powder or yellow drops disseminated by aircraft". Contact with these substances causes itching, nausea, difficulty in breathing, diarrhoea, bleeding from the nose and mouth, and death. Leaves of vegetation in stricken areas develop brown spots.

► US scientists were initially sceptical of the yellow rain accounts because no known chemical or biological warfare agent seemed to produce the combination of effects described by refugees. Later research

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ASSAM

# Nellie Revisited



*IT WILL take many years for the scars of the Assam tragedy to heal. The blood spilled at Nellie and elsewhere still stains the land and the mounds of the mass burial sites serve as stark reminders of the horror. But what of the orphans; the hundreds of infants who watched their parents die before their eyes? For them the future is still uncertain, but there are faint glimmers of hope. TARA ALI BAIG, the well-known social worker and the president of the SOS Children's villages, spent some time in Nellie and other parts of Assam recently to obtain a first-hand idea of the problems of rehabilitation and the work that has been done so far. What she observed was encouraging. Her report:*

FLYING into Gauhati, the Brahmaputra spills over the land like a jug of coffee overturned on a green floor. The river is an immense, swollen artery in the living flesh of the valley with a capillary spread of grey veins over the wide and shallow landscape. This turbulent river carries down clumps of water hyacinth in its swift current, builds up sudden silt islands they call "chars", and in mid-February this year, human bodies.

Any rise in the river perennially floods the land around. The Assamese build lightly with bamboo-plastered matting and thatch which is easily rebuilt. Floods come and go. The people can cope with floods, but massacres at noon in flashes of savage hostility are another matter altogether. The Central and state government are trying to put lives back together again now and the Central Government has asked us to set up two children's villages for 500 children, one near Mangaldoi and the other in the Nellie area.

Talking to survivors of the Nellie terror where it seems some 1,400 people were killed, revives this terror. Eyes widen, women clutch at you, a boy's face contorts with the shock of remembrance. He saw both parents cut down in a terrifying slash of "daos" as he hid behind a bundle in their hut. But everyone wants to talk. Men sprawled listlessly on a mat under a tree get up. In minutes a crowd collects. One man with some bearing of authority said there was steady drumming from early that morning, then the sound of a huge mob. Tribals with bows, arrows and spears, yelling and brandishing "daos" surged on their huts in thousands. Men and women clustered round to add their tales. They were taken by surprise. They could find no place to hide. All remembered the kerosene soaked flares, glistening in the sunlight that sent thatched roofs ablaze.

**Tragic Reminders:** In Boroburi where all this happened in the middle of February, the villagers are now rebuilding their huts, but close together for greater safety. They have a new thatched mosque and school house. Not far beyond are two huge mounds. A tattered cloth on poles states that 585 people were buried here on that fatal day of February 18. It is the only monument there. Abdur

Rehman standing dry-eyed beside it points to where his dead lie. And at the age of eight he is alone in the world. Sakina falls sobbing into my arms, saying: "Who will get me married? I have no one left." It is clear someone must look after adolescent girls too and the young mothers with their babies.

There is Hamida who looks barely 13, a four-month-old baby whose husband is also under that mound along Humaira Khatun's husband and so many others. Saida's little Rabia Bibi, however, is old and articulate. Tears course down thick runnels of her face as she wails: "All are gone, I have no one, all are gone." The new school house with its dirty windows is now filled with women. The air, hot and humid, hums with lamentation. The children look on puzzled, big-eyed clinging women, or standing mutely, hands by their sides. It's at night that they look for their mothers, that the sobbing will start. A mother cannot do without a mother. Assam villagers look after each other, a great strength at a time like this, though now they have no one to be of service.

On the surface you see schoolchildren in their various uniforms, workers, a minister, a



Abdur Rehman in front of the mass grave at Boroburi: horrific memories

going or coming from school on the main roads, gay groups of colourful "mekhlas" sauntering along, a man with an umbrella, his head ambling past on an elephant, vendors sitting by the roadside with their mounds of produce. But what has happened to the inhabitants of Boroburi? Behind this facade of normality, there is fear in these people. It is as though they do not know when the next blow will fall.

People talk freely of the paramilitary volunteer corps of Swachya Seva Bahini with its rigid discipline modelled on the network of underground revolutionaries, the bicycle system, the lorry and bus drivers who are in league, the people into every village. But life goes on. Mother Teresa came and took children away, others did too. There were so many children from these tragedies, but the camps are already full. People have gone back to their villages taking the children with them.

**Helpful Officials:** Village tradition in Assam is closely family oriented. Kinship bonds are extremely strong. S.K. Deka, district social welfare officer, had already prepared a plan for the rehabilitation of the affected families, sponsoring orphan and destitute children in their own villages.

... doing this on a coupon system with a green card for food rations, a pink one for clothing and a white one for books. They may have to provide kitchen utensils and tools if there was so much looting. The officials of this department had prepared the names of children from babies to eight years old and older girls, and widowed women to train as house mothers of homes with nine children in each basha.

In Tezpur, Dr Lashmi Goswami, the president of the Tezpur Council for Child Welfare, will take 94 children of the Gohpur valley in a similar complex. A very active social worker, Dr Saida's wife, She does not know course done gone. I have seen workers, already on that site.

The Assam officials I met were eager to travel with me and find solutions for the children displaced by the February tragedy. Nothing was put at my disposal. I was able to meet and discuss this with all the district officials, block development officers and non-officials too who are in service. In Gauhati, the chief minister and the social welfare minister were deeply interested in the effort to rehabilitate children and action has been more than prompt on the part of

now being found in the well populated, predominantly Muslim township of Hojai.

**Restoring Normalcy:** The children we shall take here will all be from the Nellie area where there is still so much fear. But being on the main road, relatives can come by bus to see them. This village will be large, for over 300 children. At Hojai, the new little township will try to create a new life, workers must be trained among the older women who have been widowed by these unhappy events. In Mangaldoi, the children's village will not be so large, and there it might be possible to have a mixed ethnic group, so that in time the tolerance which had been Assam's tradition can be restored.

The Government of India has agreed to fund the permanent structures in these children's villages in Assam and will provide the maintenance costs. Later the greatest need will be to set up workshops. One of Assam's critical problems has long been lack of higher education and scant employment possibilities. Comparable to terrorism in Bengal before Independence, educated youth become the frustrated material for revolution. Those responsible for these children, coming as they do from simple rural environments, will have to provide basic education and skills that ensure employment.



... with her four-month-old baby: desolate



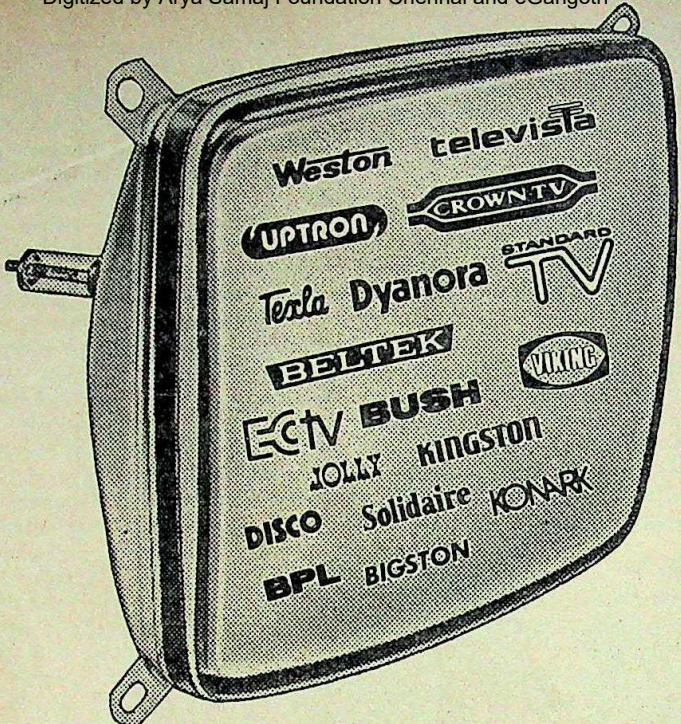
Children of Boroburi: glimmer of hope

Trovedi, the chief administrator, relief. From their state budget, with an umbrella being acquired and temporary shelters put up. In Mangaldoi, the section development officer, was a man in a hurry. The inhabitants talked glowingly of his courage, when he went out alone and repelled a violent mob in the bad days. The Security Force and repelled a violent mob in the bad days. The volunteer committee to finalise the children's resettlement as soon as possible. On the way to Tezpur, we looked at land, discussed this with the local people and planned the construction and lay-out of homely bashas, and return the next day, rough blueprints were ready and estimates arrived. The engineers promised that constructions would be completed by the middle of July.

This determination to put things right for the children raises some apprehensions about the safety of children on the proposed site at Nowgong. Mustaphazur Rahman, an engineer, was anxious about the safety of children on the proposed site at Nowgong. Indeed it filled me with some apprehensions too, as it was with woodlands, rising up to the hills. But children have forever guarded by men with rifles. Tribal villages were all it was wiser to move the site beyond Nowgong and land is

Assam abounds in coconuts, but there is no cottage industry, as in Kerala, to use the products of this versatile tree. In more modern terms, however, there is need for mechanics and repair skills for everything from pumps to transistors. Weaving is a traditional art which has so declined, almost all women one saw on the roads, villages and towns, were in mill made garments. Workshops in our children's villages will be able to train children in the neighbourhood too, which will help to create wider kinship bonds in the locality, but for the workshops we will have to seek donations from the public for buildings, equipment and trained staff. With the world-wide sympathy there has been for Assam, this should not be too difficult.

It is heartening to see the rehabilitation that has already taken place and the speed with which the inhabitants and the officials have tried to restore daily life. The underground movement, which runs deep and swift still, like the water of Brahmaputra, will continue to flow through this land and all its villages. Somehow fear must be removed from the eyes of this normally tranquil people, and its gentle life-style restored.



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## ON THE BANDWAGON

**W**ITH numerous companies planning their entries into the manufacture of cars, light commercial vehicles and two-wheelers, the automobile ancillary industry is getting primed for boom-time. Ceat Tyres is expanding its two-wheeler tyre production capacity, and the southern TVS group's Srichakra Tyres is making an entry into the field. The Modis are planning to manufacture wheel rims, Chloride India is expanding its battery production capacity, and Shriram Fibres (whose sister company within the DCM group will be making DCM-Toyota trucks) plans to manufacture clutch and brake assemblies. The TVS group, meanwhile, is planning to manufacture other ancillary items like fuel injection systems, while lesser known parties are going in for axles, steering gear assemblies and a range of other products. Industry insiders expect that even if some of the vehicles do not materialise, there will still be sufficient demand to fuel an unprecedented period of growth in the field of automobile ancillaries.

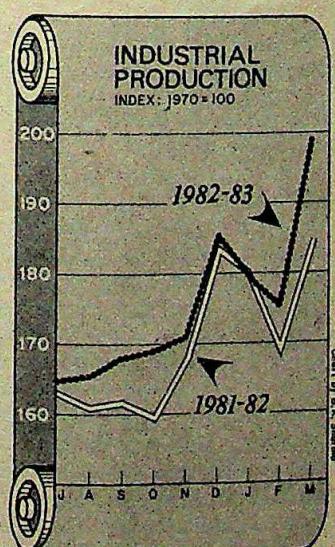
## BUSINESS MECCA

**T**HE CURTAIN goes up this month on what is likely to be India's most ambitious hard sell effort in a foreign market—if Indian companies respond in time. India is the next "partner country" at the Hanover Trade Fair in April 1984. Registrations ended at the end of July 1983, after which preparations will begin for the Trade Fair Authority hopes will be an exhibition by some companies. Being partner country means that for the week of April 10-11 next year, India's products and marketing skills will be shown at what is probably the world's largest industrial exhibition, following on the heels of Portugal (1983), Mexico (1982), Greece and Brazil (1980). Officials at the fair say that the Brazilian was among the most notable, and success at the fair has led to 80 to 100 Brazilian companies routinely participating at each year.

The fair authorities tend to choose as partners countries who believe are industrially at the take-off stage and can put an impressive array of industrial products on display. For Hanover is April the mecca of some 80,000 businessmen and industrialists from countries as diverse as Abu Dhabi and Zambia. But to impress a German public relations consultant in Hanover said, "Indians must do better than the best."

## PRESSING TREND

**T**HE SIGNALS from the industrial front remain confusing. After showing a negative growth rate in January this year, over January (the first time in 30 months), industrial production index picked up to register a 7.5 per cent rate of growth in March over March 1982, only for it to slacken again in April around 4.5 per cent. The financial year 1982-83 has in fact been the worst so far under the present government, with industrial growth of 3.5 per cent comparing with 4.6 per cent in 1981-82 and 4.8 per cent in 1980-81. In the manufacturing sector, the growth is less than 1.8 per cent. Reasons for this depressing picture are the textile strike, the credit squeeze, power shortages and agricultural year, coupled with the recession abroad.



## FLOATING A VENTURE

**G**OURI Prasad Goenka, of Duncan Agro Industries Ltd, plans to introduce a revolutionary technique of producing magnesium, which is needed as refractory material in a large number of industries but primarily in steel. A new company which Goenka intends to float in collaboration with his US partners will tap magnesium from the sea at a point near Visakhapatnam—a process that is the first of its kind in the country and which will lead to substantial cost advantages over the current process, which depends on magnesite ore. Apart from this, Goenka expects to benefit in the long run from such factors as the certainty that the raw material will neither get exhausted nor its costs increase. Sea water, after all, is both abundant and free.

## PROFIT STAKES

**F**OR ALL the problems caused last year by the recession in demand in numerous industrial sectors, corporate profitability does not seem to have suffered. An analysis by *Business Standard* of the performance of 100 companies who closed their accounts in the latter half of 1982 shows a 26.6 per cent rise in gross profits, from Rs 582 crore to Rs 737 crore. Profits after tax are up by an even smarter 45.1 per cent. Industries like cement, the recession-hit paper industry and fertiliser are among those which recorded the sharpest increases in profitability. Of 16 groups of industries analysed, only one—trading—witnessed a decline in its gross profits, by a marginal 0.9 per cent. However, profit ratios have shown a drop in 10 of the 16 groups of industries, while gross profits as a percentage of total assets for all 100 companies have dropped marginally from 13.5 to 13.4 per cent.

## MORE YARN

**C**LOSE on the heels of the Government's decision to expand the production capacities for nylon filament yarn (*Trade Winds, INDIA TODAY*, July 15) decisions are expected shortly on substantially expanding the capacity for polyester filament yarn. Most of the new capacity to be created will be achieved through expanding some of the existing units, which include Reliance Textile, Century Enka, Garware Nylons, and Indian Rayon. But some of the units that have already benefited from a recent regularisation of excess capacity may not be allowed further expansion. A notable new entrant into the field is likely to be Bharat Gears, which belongs to industrialist Raunaq Singh. Dhirubhai Ambani's Reliance Textile is expected to remain at the top of the pile with a production capacity of 25,000 tonnes. No other unit is likely to be allowed more than 15,000 tonnes.

## ECONOMIC POLICIES

# More Of The Same

*...In our government, processing of applications and licences is easier. We are face to face with industrialists and we are always there to solve their problems immediately. All these factors, along with our general expediting programme, will stimulate industrial growth."*



THIS might be Narain Dutt Tiwari holding forth on New Delhi's industrial policy to a clutch of multinational big-wigs in Geneva or New York, but it is not. It is actually N.T. Rama Rao explaining his 'new' package of investment and other incentives in a newspaper interview. He was asked whether his industrial policy would depart substantially from that of the earlier Congress(I) government. "There is no real departure," said Rama Rao.

There is no real departure either as far as Ramakrishna Hegde's government in Karnataka is concerned. Hegde is not as vocal as Rama Rao, but he knows, and so does his counterpart in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh, that in the present system of industrial and financial control, there is very little room for manoeuvre at the state level and all they can do is to make things a little easier for some businessmen, which means a little less easy for others. This is also what they do at the Centre; so Rama Rao is merely taking out a leaf from Tiwari's book and using it in his home state, adding perhaps a comma here and semicolon there, but keeping by and large to the basic framework of the ruling party's policies.

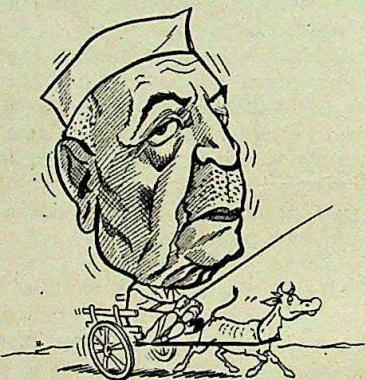
**Inadequate Policies:** What is it that the opposition parties are saying when they say they are aiming at an 'alternative' government? Do they have alternative economic policies or would they, like Rama Rao in Andhra Pradesh, also follow in the footsteps of the ruling party, with perhaps a few minor changes, just for the heck of it?

During the Janata regime, there was no real attempt at operating a new economic policy, although some party officials did come out with what they called a Janata economic blueprint. The party President, Chandra Shekhar, has always claimed to be the author of the Congress's 'Garibi Hatao' slogan and a co-author, along with P.N. Haksar and others, of the populist economic programme of the Congress that resulted in a massive expansion of the public sector through the nationalisation of 14 leading banks in 1969.

The present Janata Party is dominated by socialists who swear by nationalisation and the 'commanding heights' syndrome and do not possibly see anything basically wrong in Mrs Gandhi's economic objectives which are also socialist. If anything, they would strengthen the role of the public sector, make it more difficult for multinationals and foreign capital to come in with new technology and tighten the screws on whatever is left of the private sector. Chandra Shekhar & Co are more populist in temperament than the hard-headed leaders of the Congress(I) and their economic policies would be longer

control of all productive resources, including capital, while as a Gandhian party it does not really think that great chunks of capital are necessary for development. As a nationalised party, it would presumably curb the entry of foreign capital and technology and do away with multinationals. In any case, Gandhians do not really believe that technology, even if it were available, would be appropriate for solving the problem of unemployment and poverty.

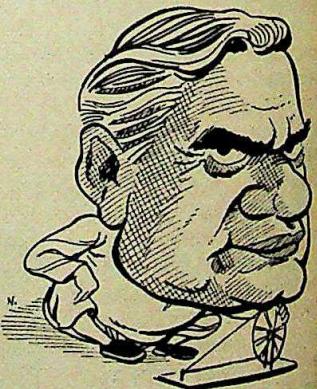
**Party Differences:** Assuming, for sake of argument, that these parties share their vague and contradictory conception of poverty and welfare did come together to form a government at the Centre, as they did in 1977, they would come to blows in time, as they did two years later in 1979. It has been said that the Janata Party broke up on the issue of the role of the RSS triggered by the petty jealousies of three old men in search of the top job. This may be true but it is also equally true that the parties, or a large number of their followers, were indeed right down in the middle over basic economic issues and the differences were bound to come out in the open in the end, as they eventually did. The Janata Government



on rhetoric and shorter on results. George Fernandes handled his industry portfolio in the same way as does Narain Dutt Tiwari, though he did make more noise.

**Limited Vision:** As regards Charan Singh, the less said the better. It was his 1979 budget that sent the economy crashing and the stock markets tumbling. He repeated last week what he has said umpteen times before that he saw a very limited role for large industry and high technology in India and would have no use for them in his scheme of things. Charan Singh believes that many Indians are poor because some Indians are rich, and just as he would have no use for high technology and big business—which, he suspects, made these few Indians rich—he would have no use also for wealthy Indians and would send them packing. Charan Singh is the last Gandhian for whom history stopped sometime in 1948.

The third main opposition party, BJP, has not really come out with an authentic blueprint on its economic policies, so one doesn't really know where it stands. It believes in Gandhian socialism, a contradiction in terms, though it has not cared to spell out what this means in economic terms. As a socialist party, it presumably believes in state



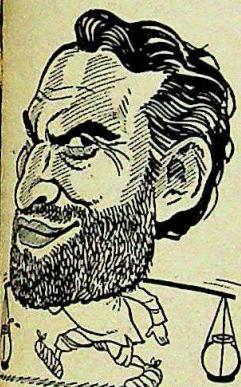
made little impact in economic terms, for qualitative differences between the Janata approach and the traditional Congress approach were minimal.

The opposition leaders talk vaguely about the 'system' which, they allege, is responsible for the present conditions in the country. Chandra Shekhar makes much of this overpowering system which seems to have the country in its grip and against which all are apparently powerless. As I see it, the economic system consists of three main instruments: (1) Planning Commission; (2) Public Sector; and (3) Private Sector. They believe in

There is also the instrument of and capital, but this is marginal to no more than 4 to 5 per cent gross national product in any year.

THEN a party or a party politician says that they would change the system, what they mean is that they place or moderate the roles of these instruments to subserve their policy. What would the Janata Party do? To do away with the planning process? My hunch is that Chandra Shekhar would fortify it and give it a more touch. He would also fortify the system, though it remains as inefficient and has obviously outlived its social technology, and the problem.

assuming, for these parties are private sector to size and bring it to come together. Centre, as they blow in 1973 later in 1975. The RSS triggered three old men may be true parties, or all powers, were a file over basic differences were but in the end, as a Government



means bureaucratic control. He would take the country back to the populist phase of 1970s which caused social and political upheaval finally to the Emergency. Chandra Shekhar does not probably see the scenario but history has its own logic, and causes have certain effects.

Singh would react in a slightly different way but the end-results would be the same. He would almost certainly continue with the Planning Commission—you don't throw away authoritarianism that easily—but he would go with the big projects—the steel mills, one thing, would be out—and focus on handlooms, tubewells and cars with rubber tyres. He would close existing steel plants and the factories in the public sector—to wonder—and stop the Maruti car on tracks. As for the private sector, he would possibly ask them to fend for themselves. As I see it, he will not rely on the Government for multinationals for new technologies.

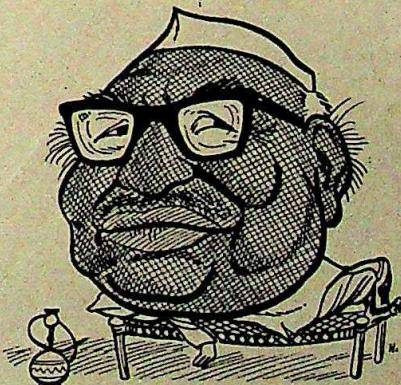
**Naive Economies:** The BJP's mind is a mystery, though they do believe in free economy and

enterprise. How this can be reconciled with a socialist economy and that too with a Gandhian flavour is another of those mysteries which only political parties seem to nurse. The BJP would have a planning commission, for all socialists believe in planning. It would also have a burgeoning public sector, for all socialists believe in state control. It would presumably encourage a private sector, for the party also believes in private enterprise.

The party says that it would administer the programme more efficiently than the ruling party, but all parties say that. The bureaucracy is very much a part of the system and if the system itself remains unchanged, as it would under the BJP, the bureaucrats too would continue to function as before, as in fact they did under the Janata regime.

Is there then no alternative to Mrs Gandhi's economic strategy? There is, but it would call for less government control, not more, more of an open economy, not less, more decentralisation, not less, and less political interference, not more. But political parties are by definition parties looking for power, and since political power subsumes economic power, they are also looking for economic power. Political parties fear that they might be forced to commit political suicide by handing over bits of their power to others, but they are wrong.

Margaret Thatcher was returned to power with an increased majority of seats, though not of votes despite her programme



—of privatisation of nationalised junk companies, and despite a record number of jobless on the dole. Britain may not be a better place than it was when Thatcher took over as prime minister four years ago, but there is obviously a large number of Britons—as many as 43 per cent—who believe that it is going to be better with her than with her opponents. The Labour Party which should have gained from all those jobless people on the streets and which has the kind of programme Chandra Shekhar would love to draw up, wound up in a dismal second place with slightly over a quarter of the votes polled.

**Crucial Juncture:** What is true of Britain need not necessarily be true of India—the two countries are poles apart on the development scale—but the unrest in India is no different from the unrest in that country. The economies of both countries have undergone a tremendous change over the last couple of decades but the pressures of change are so enormous that the two societies find themselves unable to cope with them. In India, we have completed one phase of our industrial revolution and are on the threshold of another.

Last week, the country commissioned its third atomic power station (at Kalpakkam, near Madras) something of a triumph for a nation that still burns more cowdung than coal. The power station was designed, engineered, constructed and commissioned by our own engineers, with negligible foreign exchange content. Twenty-five years ago, such a feat would have been unimaginable. But while we can put up nuclear power plants on our own, our telephones go dead in the very first rainstorm and water taps go dry in the midst of floods.

We are not poor because we have gone in for high technology but because we have not used high technology to create jobs, and above all, to create wealth. The average Chinese is better off than the average Indian, because the Chinese produce more of nearly everything than we do. They produced four times as much crude oil as we do, more than three times our coal, and twice our foodgrains. There are, of course, more Chinese than there are Indians, but not that many.

The main criterion should be not whether a system is socialist or capitalist, Gandhian or Marxist, hi-tech or small-scale, centrally planned or free, but whether it delivers the goods. A tree should be judged by its fruit, not by its roots. Similarly an ideology or a system should be judged by its results, not by its intentions. It is all very well to have a planning commission well equipped with computers and input-output tables worked out to the third place of decimal but if its plans always go awry, it is not much good as a planning instrument.

An opposition leader who talks about poverty and hunger and lack of drinking water and fuel is not saying anything that is new. Mrs Gandhi also talks about poverty and has her own 20-point programme to tackle it. Unless the opposition parties come up with something more than a souped-up version of the 20-point programme and something different from the old rusted instruments that have been blunted through use by the ruling party, they should think twice before asking people to take them seriously as an alternative magnet for power.

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## TELECOMMUNICATIONS

# Crossed Wires

**C**ROSSED wires have been a recurring headache for India's long-suffering telephone users. But now the decision makers responsible for the telephone system have themselves got their lines all mixed up. Result: a lot of cross-talk, and an unexpected decision last fortnight that meant an abrupt disconnection of numerous conversations. At issue is the modernisation of the national telephone system itself, and the introduction of electronic switching systems (equipment in a telephone exchange) that will—finally—take the most important step to bring the country's telephone system out of the Neanderthal age.

Negotiations had been going on for over a year with four companies—all of them giants in the field—but with little warning the Government announced on June 29 that the contract for setting up a Rs 100 crore plus switching equipment factory at Bangalore would go to the French firm CIT-Alcatel. A vital decision involved in modernising the country's telephone network had been taken in a manner that left everybody aghast.

**Unexpected Move:** Justifying the instantly controversial decision, T.S. Subramaniam, member of the Posts and Telegraphs (P&T) Board in charge of telecommunications development, argued that the bids from other companies did not meet basic requirements, and that since an earlier contract had already been given to CIT-Alcatel a repeat order would provide the advantages of common technology and other facilities.

Neither argument washed with the decision's numerous critics. To start with, the earlier order—for a factory at Gonda in Uttar Pradesh—had been awarded to the French company without other companies being allowed to bid (a deal that was widely interpreted as being linked to the virtually simultaneous deal to buy Mirage aircraft from France). At that stage, it had been explicitly stated in internal documents that a second technology would be chosen for the plant at Bangalore.

But the more galling aspect of the decision was the statement that the other bidders did not meet basic requirements. For even if that was the case, the last one year has seen strange behaviour on the part of the Government. To start with, the rival bids, far being thrown out soon after they were submitted in March 1982 on the ground that they did not meet tender specifications, were vigorously pursued. The Government had

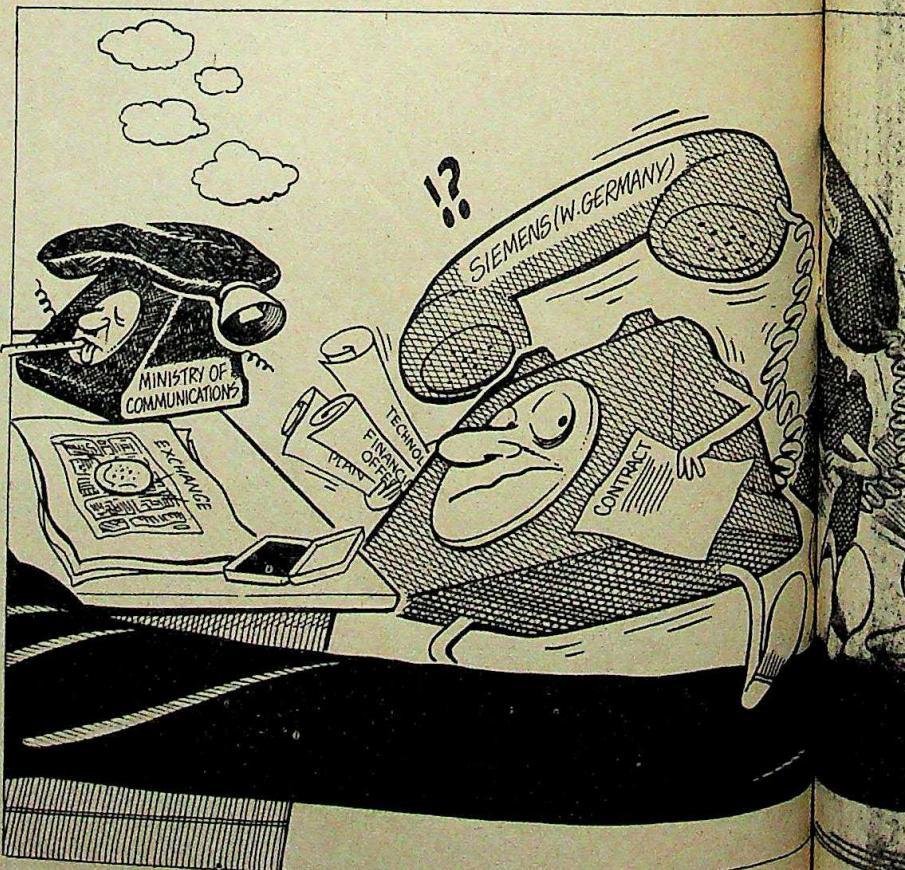
carried out prolonged negotiations with the companies concerned—Siemens of West Germany, General Electric Corporation (part of British Telecom), and a Belgian subsidiary of International Telephones and Telegraphs (ITT) of America. In February this year, the Government had in fact sent each of these three companies detailed questionnaires on the basis of their bids, seeking more information. And the companies had spent time and money—Siemens alone spent some Rs 50 lakh on the bidding process—in replying. Finally, only days before the Government announced its decision, it had asked the companies to extend the validity period of their bids by three months, from June-end to September-end. But the bids and replies to questionnaires were not even considered.

**Hasty Decision:** The awarding of the contract to CIT-Alcatel short-circuited the decision making process in other ways. A note on the subject had been sent in early June by the Ministry of Communications to the Cabinet, and had been sent back with the

advice that it should be circulated among the concerned ministries. This process was still under way when the Cabinet emerged from a Friday morning meeting with an unexpected decision.

In doing so, the Government did not even bother to open the financial bids made by the companies—so that there is no way of knowing whether the French offer was financially attractive or not. Nevertheless, when the West German Minister of Communications, Schwarz Schilling, came visiting earlier this year, he had discussions with Mrs Gandhi, Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee and the Minister of State for Communications, V.N. Gadgil. Some of these discussions had centred on the financial offer linked to the Siemens bid. Subsequently, Schilling had held out the prospect of loans that would virtually pay for the foreign exchange cost of the project, at an average rate of interest of no more than 2.5 per cent. Said a German diplomat posted in Delhi, and one "This is the best financial offer we have ever made." But, when the decision was taken, the offer did not count at all since that the financial aspect of the bids was not in 1982 as the considered.

The official reason for this is that atistic Siemens as well as GEC and ITT did not have 5,000 lines in operation before May. Said Sub



regulated among them. Said Subramaniam: "Only CIT-Alcatel had qualified on this count. So the question of 'locking' at the financial bids did not come up."

**Explanations:** The facts, however, are quite so cut and dry. Siemens at the time of bidding had an exchange of 4,370 million rupees working in South Africa—a capacity far enough to the specified 5,000 for establishing the viability of the technology offered. But the Government felt that Indian experts could not visit Africa for inspection, and wanted to exchange somewhere else—a statement reportedly conveyed by the Minister of State for Communications, C.M. Gadgil. Some exchanges over the time period on the French bid. Subsequently, Siemens commisioned an exchange in Germany, and Indian experts were invited to inspect that—which may or may not do. Some of the other bidders than 2.5 percent commissioned exchanges over the posted in Delhi, and one company representative offered we have that P&T experts had in fact visited decision was taken abroad. But Subramaniam insisted that the tender documents specified date was not 1982 as the cut-off date.

in this not quibbling over dates when for this is what was to establish that the ITT did not companies had functioning technology before May? Said Subramaniam: "We had to

That was a pretty thin explanation, for in that case why had the P&T itself sent a note to the Cabinet asking that this particular condition be waived? And why had negotiations with the companies gone on for over a year when it was evident that they did not qualify?

**Initial Opposition:** Despite Subramaniam's brave effort to defend the deal, it is widely believed that he had earlier led the field in opposing the bid by CIT-Alcatel. This could well be the reason why he was chosen as the man to announce and then defend the awarding of the contract to CIT-Alcatel. But opposition to the deal had come from other quarters too: the Communications Ministry's telecommunications experts are believed to have been in favour of a second technology, while the Department of Electronics had strongly opposed the awarding of even the Gonda factory to the French company.

Judging the issue from the viewpoint of modernising the country's electronics industry, and starting the commercial production of large-scale integrated circuits (LSI's) the department had argued that rival technologies were more suited for the purpose, especially since the Semi-Conductor

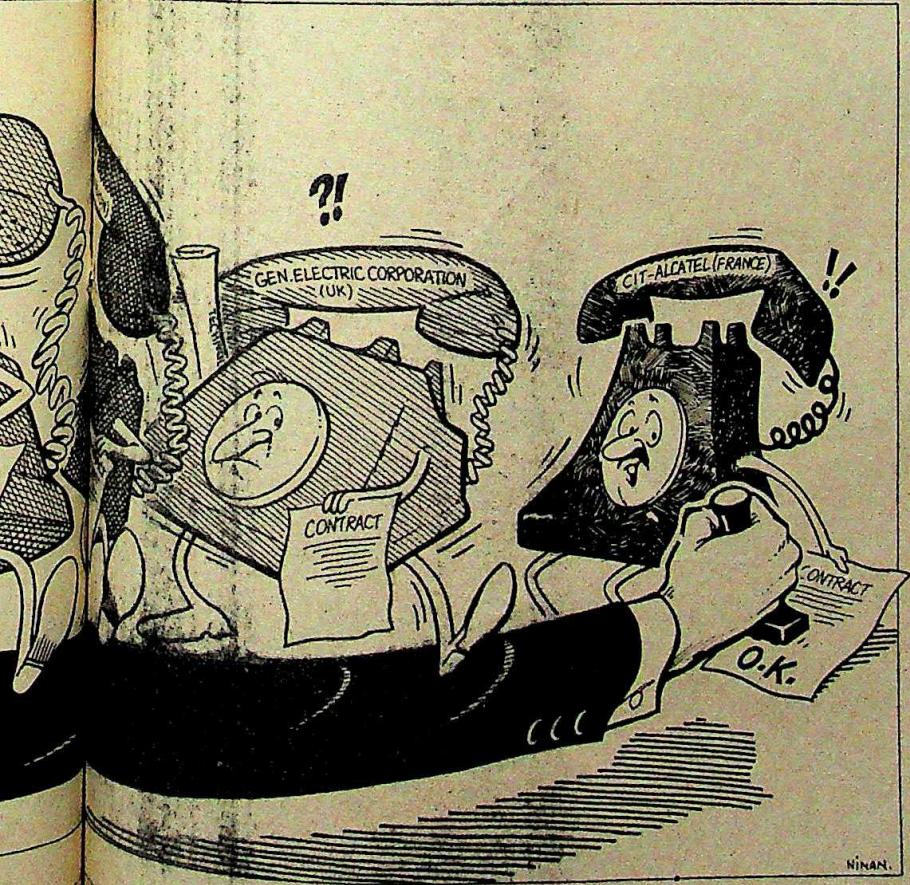
Complex Ltd (SCL) in Chandigarh was being set up specifically to manufacture chips for such end-users as the telecommunications industry. Virendra Mohan, chairman of SCL, says: "The CIT-Alcatel technology is old and does not incorporate enough LSI's unlike the more modern systems." Interviewed before the awarding of the Bangalore contract also to CIT-Alcatel, Mohan had hoped that this second plant would provide SCL with more business. Similarly, officials in the Finance Ministry are believed to have been in favour of offers that included attractive financial terms.

**Alternative Technologies:** As things stand, the best financial offer had come from Siemens of West Germany, while the French have not offered any financial package with the CIT-Alcatel offer. In the case of chip manufacturing technology, ITT had offered this as a part of its bid, while CIT-Alcatel does not have an equivalent range of technological know-how for chip manufacture, and in any case had not included this in its tender bid.

On both counts, the Government now argues that negotiations will be started with the French. But financial negotiations that are started after the awarding of the contract give the French a distinct position of advantage, while the transfer of CIT-Alcatel's LSI technology to SCL has to be negotiated—and paid for—separately.

While all these criticisms focussed essentially on the quirks in the Government's decision making process and its inexplicable irrationality, other criticisms were being levelled last fortnight against the technology that CIT-Alcatel had offered. These centred on the fundamental point that the technology was one step behind those offered by the others in that it was not "fully" digital electronic, and that it would soon be phased out in Europe when the more advanced technologies that the Government had just rejected came into their own. It was even pointed out that the French, having failed to keep pace in this field, and strapped for cash, were already shopping around for a suitable collaboration with some of the companies that India had rejected, so that CIT-Alcatel could stay in the game. References were being made to the director-general of CIT-Alcatel's mother company CGE (Compagnie Generale d'Electricite) stating in public that for CIT-Alcatel to stay in the race they would have to arrange a collaboration within the next few months.

It was also being stated about the system that since it was not the latest technology, it was less flexible than more modern substitutes, that it involved greater transmission losses, and that opting for it would involve greater costs at a later stage in changing over to more modern systems.





Because there's more  
to the news than meets the eye

INDIA  
**TODAY**  
THE COMPLETE NEWSMAGAZINE

THE ANSWER to these criticisms comes from Francois Riergert, commercial counsellor in the French embassy in Delhi. "CIT-Alcatel's is a modern switching system that has been constantly proved. And it is the only system that offers proven technology: as many as eight lines are in operation around the world and numerous countries—the US, Finland, Egypt and others—have chosen this system." Riergert also points out that the agreement provides for full technology transfer and a joint research and development effort, so that India will benefit from further technological developments. The choice clearly was between a fully proven technology and others that are more state-of-the-art but not fully proven to the extent that the French system is. And, given the option of opting for a not fully proven technology—and the P.T.T.'s earlier experiences in such risks, as with the Pentaconta in the 1960s—a valid argument could be made out in favour of a system that carries lower risks.

Nevertheless, critics of last fortnight's article were not willing to accept that the new system would be trouble-free. One of them: "The P.T.T. sent an team to study CIT-Alcatel's systems in Sri Lanka and North Yemen. They came back with the finding that each system had had problems there." Raman dismisses these as having been no more than "teething troubles" inherent in the adoption of any new system so complex. Another engineer argued that the generation technology gap between such and rival systems need not make much of a difference if in the process the country was getting a system that offered a reasonable certainty that it would work. "I say that this is a good decision, but it may not be the best."

**Continuing Doubts:** For all that, the P.T.T. remained: in choosing to place all its eggs in one basket, was the Government taking a risk with a company that was apparently looking to others for modernising its technology, and doing so without the advantages of a better financial package or technology transfers in the manner of LSI's? In any case, why had a decision been taken so suddenly, in an reversal of earlier moves to negotiate detailed terms with rival companies? For instance, had financial terms been agreed with a German minister, and why had talks from the other companies been called off when at least one of them had already brought a 12-man delegation to Delhi?

And convincing answers emerged to other questions. There was specula-

tion that the decision was once again linked to parallel deals being negotiated with the French in sensitive areas of technology. But the Mirage deal (with which the Gonda switching system contract was linked) has not made much headway and may even be stopped short. Nevertheless, there was little doubt that the decision was taken not at the dealer-ministry level but in the prime minister's office, and instructions then handed down for a suitable proposal to be put up for the Cabinet to consider.

**Inexplicable Decisions:** Meanwhile, the waywardness of the entire decision-making process was of a piece with the Communications Ministry's track record on other contracts meant to help modernise the country's telephone system. One case in

*While all these criticisms focussed essentially on the quirks in the Government's decision-making process and its inexplicable irrationality, other criticisms were being levelled last fortnight against the technology that CIT-Alcatel had offered*

point was the decision, also announced last fortnight, to award the contract for a trunk automatic exchange equipment factory at Palghat in Kerala to CIT-Alcatel. This was despite the fact that the French company had not even made a bid in response to the original tender for the project, and that detailed negotiations had instead been on alternately with ITT's Belgian subsidiary and Nippon Electric of Japan. CIT-Alcatel, once again, got the contract on the grounds of common technology and facilities.

A second similar case concerns the contract for introducing new, modern telephone instruments—the present 1940s vintage instruments are often more responsible for complaints than the switching equipment in the exchange. As in the case of Palghat, negotiations started over three years ago, but unlike Palghat, a decision was soon taken on giving the contract to ITT's Italian subsidiary, Face Standard. The decision was cleared by every imaginable authority: the Department of Electronics, the directorate general of technical development, the Finance Ministry and the Planning Commission. But the contract is still to be awarded, and the indications last fortnight were that it never would be awarded.

Instead, a new tender was likely to be floated, roping in this time not just the production plans of the Indian Telephone Industries (ITI)—which was to make the Face instruments—but also those of four state electronics corporations. If this decision was implemented, that would mean another two years' delay—at least.

Yet a third instance of waywardness involved the location of the first switching factory (using CIT-Alcatel technology). The initial proposal was to base the plant in Bangalore, which has the facilities and infrastructure required to support a project involving sophisticated technology. Instead, inexplicably, the Government decided to locate the factory in Gonda district of Uttar Pradesh, a place with none of the facilities that are required.

**Unsuitable Location:** Anand Singh, Congress(I) MP from Gonda, explains the reason for this: he had been pressing Mrs Gandhi for a factory—any factory—to be located in Gonda in order to help develop his backward constituency. He had hoped to bag one of the four new fertiliser plants scheduled to come up in Uttar Pradesh, but this was ruled out because the alignment of the natural gas pipeline from Bombay offshore did not permit this (natural gas is a raw material for fertiliser). When Anand Singh went to Mrs Gandhi, she offered him the switching equipment factory. Says Singh: "I had not heard of this project, and did not know of CIT-Alcatel. I just wanted a factory, because if Gonda never got a factory it would always remain backward."

The point, of course, is that a high-technology electronics unit is least suited for a place like Gonda, and officials have despaired at the decision. How, for instance, do you persuade software specialists who can easily get highly-paid jobs abroad to go on a posting to Gonda? Result: some of the facilities that were initially slated for Gonda may now be shifted back to Bangalore, where the second switching equipment factory is to be installed.

These delays and quirky decisions have had their inevitable result: vast sums are being spent on the direct import of both switching equipment and telephone instruments, when the timely setting up of numerous projects would have ensured domestic production of the needed equipment. Despite the imports, there is a queue of over a million people waiting for telephone connections—and willing to pay sums of up to Rs 8,000 for getting plugged into what is arguably the world's worst telephone system.

But with the decision-makers themselves becoming the victims of crossed wires, cross-talk, delayed connections and finally all too often a wrong number, can the situation get better?

—T.N. NINAN

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# utile Exercise

THE FRAZED fabric of North-South cooperation was further ripped at the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), which met in Belgrade last fortnight. Six weeks earlier Mrs Gandhi as chairperson of the Non-aligned nations had, while delivering the keynote Raul Prebisch lecture, done her best in a forthright speaking about the economic backdrop to the conference. "It is my duty to speak in a forthright manner and not to play the seriousness of the situation down," she told delegates from 148 countries gathered at the Yugoslav capital's Suwa Centre. "The ill wind from North is creating uncontrollable eddies in South," causing "a new type of surrogate colonialism," she added.

Her words summed up the frustrations of developing countries who faced UNCTAD negotiators in the conference's various working groups, they did little to help UNCTAD from its recent fate of being a talking shop. At an earlier UNCTAD conference in Delhi in 1968, there had emerged the much-acclaimed Generalised System of Preferences (GSP), a system for giving exports from Third World countries preferential treatment.

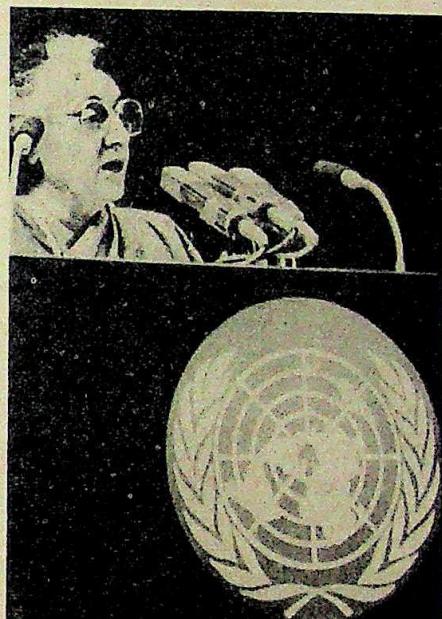
**Negative Trend:** But subsequent meetings proved increasingly fruitless: the UNCTAD in 1976 aimed at an ambitious commodities fund that would help the export earnings of Third World commodity exporters, but the fund was still not produced even less by way of results on many issues confronting the Third World trade flows and global financial reserves being two of them.

The Belgrade meet, despite Mrs Gandhi speaking, failed to be anything more than a continuation of this negative trend. The main tussle at the conference was between a three-man team of Third World negotiators led by India's Muchkund Dubey and US and western economic recovery experts enough to pull the developing countries out of recession, expand their exports, reduce their foreign debt and raise the standard of living.

Dubey argued that western economic recovery would itself be jeopardised by causing trouble in developing countries, mainly their inability to buy western industrial goods because of low export earnings. He urged a special package of emergency measures to bolster world economies, alongside separate

measures within western nations to boost employment levels and economic growth.

**Support:** India's position was supported not only by UNCTAD Secretary-General Gamini Correa of Sri Lanka but also by Arthur Dunkel, the Swiss head of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and A.W. Clausen of the World Bank. The IMF's Jacques de Larosiere of France was the



Mrs Gandhi delivering the Raul Prebisch lecture: plain speaking

only economic agency chief sceptical of Third World views.

Since the conference's final statement reflected the Third World stand, US disassociated itself, splitting from its developed country partners including the European Economic Community (EEC) and Japan, which accepted the statement. Developing countries hailed US isolation as a victory, although the Americans promptly blocked agreement on any of the emergency measures which would have brought much needed immediate benefits.

First proposed by UNCTAD's Secretariat, the emergency package called for a transfer, within two years, of \$80 billion (Rs 80,000 crore) to the South in new money to enable it to import western goods. It also included measures to raise commodity export earnings by at least \$20 billion (Rs 20,000 crore) and to end protectionist barriers against all Third World exports. The developing countries persisted in pushing for the package although both the US and the EEC rejected it months before the conference as being far

beyond their current political and economic capabilities.

**Recriminations:** Western diplomats charged Third World negotiators with showing lack of political acumen in disregarding the constraints on northern negotiators and trying to pin the blame on them for the conference deadlock. Said a European: "The deadlock occurred not because we were being bloody-minded but because none of us can possibly persuade our politicians to authorise transfers worth \$100 billion to developing countries in these times of high unemployment."

The key negotiations on protectionist barriers were handled by India's Bhagirath Das who rejected the US argument that those barriers will fall automatically once western economic recovery creates more demand for Third World exports. Das insisted that the West should promise to impose a "standstill" on new barriers and "rollback" existing ones. Under pressure, the US agreed to the pledge but announced new curbs against certain steel imports less than two days later in Washington. It remains to be seen whether the US and the EEC fulfil another pledge made at Belgrade to stop "harassing" the Third World through punitive duties against exporters alleged to have "dumped" goods at throwaway prices or to have benefitted from government subsidies.

The West refused to discuss means of helping oil-importing developing countries to finance their \$40 billion (Rs 40,000 crore) annual trade deficits, saying that the IMF not UNCTAD should handle such issues. They also turned down Mrs Gandhi's call for a new world monetary conference to reform the IMF and other financial institutions, first made in New Delhi by the Non-aligned summit last March. Third World spokesman Abdillahi Said Osman ruefully described the Belgrade results as meagre and very disappointing, particularly when set against the five weeks of intensive bargaining at Belgrade and the 18 months of difficult preparations. Said he: "There is a limit to how much our home economies can do unaided to adjust to shocks from the outside."

The southern aim at Belgrade was to spark honest debate on how to better protect developing countries against the "uncontrollable eddies" referred to by Mrs Gandhi. Recognising the threat to existing world decision-taking structures, US negotiators came with instructions to reject all arguments for change however well founded. The hope for the future now lies in the recognition by western politicians that their countries' longer term interests deserve more attention than short-term expediencies. North-South cooperation might then make the final stretch. But the prospects are far from bright.

--BRIJ KHINDARIA in Geneva

## FISHERIES

# A Poor Catch

FOR HALF a decade, the country's fish production has been stagnant at 1.5 million tonnes. Most of the large industrial houses that jumped into the trawler business some years ago have either pulled out already or are in the process of doing so; all but one of the state corporations in the field are running at a loss and unable to raise the finance for expanding operations; and the traditional fishermen—the mainstay of the industry—have been increasingly threatened by the expansion in number of mechanised fishing boats.

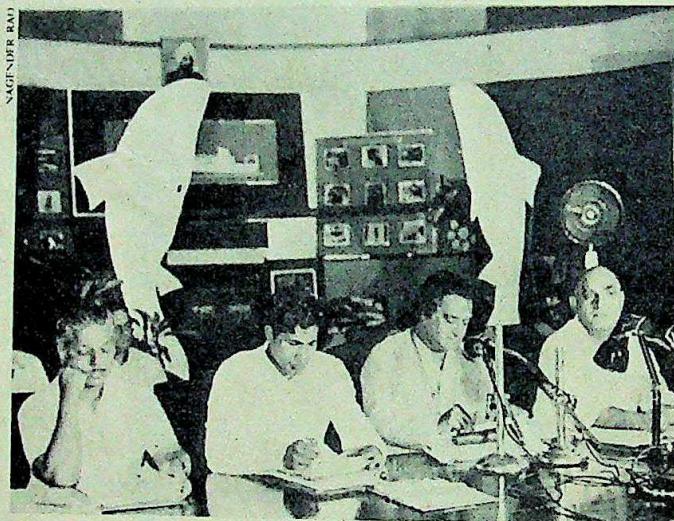
Enough reason for the convening of the first ever chief ministers' conference on fishing, at Hyderabad in late June. But if this suggested a new sense of urgency in addressing the problems confronting fishermen, the meeting was a let-down. Of the 10 chief ministers of maritime states who were invited, only three showed up. Of these, N.T. Rama Rao of Andhra Pradesh was the host, Vasantdada Patil of Maharashtra attended but did not speak (Madhavsinh Solanki of Gujarat spoke but did not attend—his speech was read out in absentia), and the presence of Pratap Singh Rane of Goa only served to emphasise the absence of his counterparts from Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, West Bengal, Gujarat, Kerala and Orissa. For a crucial meet on fisheries, it was a pretty wet affair.

**Predictable Issues:** The conference followed predictable lines: the states asked for money, the Centre gave advice. Said one state fisheries official at the end of the meeting: "The Government of India thinks we are schoolchildren." Much of what was discussed also served to underline the difficulties underlying any major thrust in the field.

Nevertheless, some significant shifts in fisheries thinking emerged. Essentially, these reflected a move away from concentrating on increasing production by any and every means, and instead worrying more about issues like fishermen's welfare and limiting activity in areas where over-fishing has become a problem. Efforts to increase production should from now on be concentrated on diversifying the fish catch (away from the over-fished shrimp, for example, in favour of such under-fished species as anchoviella), and on deep sea fishing—a vast

but virtually untapped area that will take the industry into deeper waters but should yield better results.

As elements of a new charter, these were unexceptionable. But official-level deliberations in Hyderabad showed up the difficulties confronting each new initiative. The welfare of fishermen—among the most depressed of economic groups—has been a long neglected subject, with the Planning



Rao Birendra Singh addressing the Hyderabad conference:  
troubled waters

Commission even criticising states like Kerala that sought in the past to stress welfare rather than production. But all this changed with a letter that Mrs Gandhi wrote to chief ministers in early June, drawing their attention to the urgent need for taking care of poor fishermen.

The question was how. The Centre suggested bringing all fishermen under the protection of accident insurance, but Kerala pointed out that it already provided ex gratia payment in the case of accidental death or injury. It was felt that fishermen should be provided with monetary help during the lean monsoon months, but any scheme involving either collecting money or paying it out to some three lakh fishermen quickly came up against the problem of unmanageable numbers. In yet a third case, of a proposal to ensure minimum support prices for fishermen, the officials quickly decided that this was virtually unworkable.

Nevertheless, agreement was reached on providing calamity relief, to try and introduce group insurance for mechanised boats in order to reduce premium costs, and to

make bank loans easier to fishermen who have been exploited as a matter of course by moneylender-traders.

**Biggest Difficulty:** On the product front, the significant development was recognition of over-fishing as a problem, with the officials agreeing that "in certain areas there is need for limiting entry of boats". But this is clearly not easy. Kerala is one state where over-fishing could be one of the reasons for the steadily declining catch; but the state's fisheries development adviser, T.A. Mammen, said: "Limiting entry of new boats means first registering the fishing boats in the state, then having the enforcement machinery to make the policy effective." Most states are simply not equipped for such a task.

The major area of contention held out for increasing production was deep sea fishing. The first steps in this area were taken a couple of years ago, but only 119 trawlers are operating at the moment and account for a minuscule portion of the national catch. Union Agriculture Minister Rao Birendra Singh felt that while trawler expansion was an urgent task, it was only logical that public sector fisheries plays a dominant role. The public sector, however, is hardly in any shape to take this responsibility. Said the naging director of one state-owned fisheries corporation: "Except for Gujarat corporation the financial position of all other corporations is poor. And the Seafaring Development Fund Committee will advance loans on easy terms unless the creditworthy, whatever the minister says."

The second option for expanding deep sea fishing is through chartering foreign vessels, but private operators complain that the government's policy in this area is restrictive and in any case too time-consuming: in all too many cases, in time official approval comes for chartering a ship (usual time taken: one year) and the ship has already been hired out to someone else.

The target set by the Centre is to increase the deep sea fishing fleet to 350 in the next five years. But though fisheries experts say this is an area of huge potential—the catches so far have been better than expected—the prices remain unremunerative—few experts see a kind of take-off that is required for ushering in a blue revolution.

—T.N. NINAN with AMARNATH K. MURTHY

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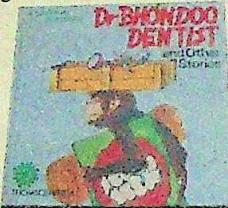
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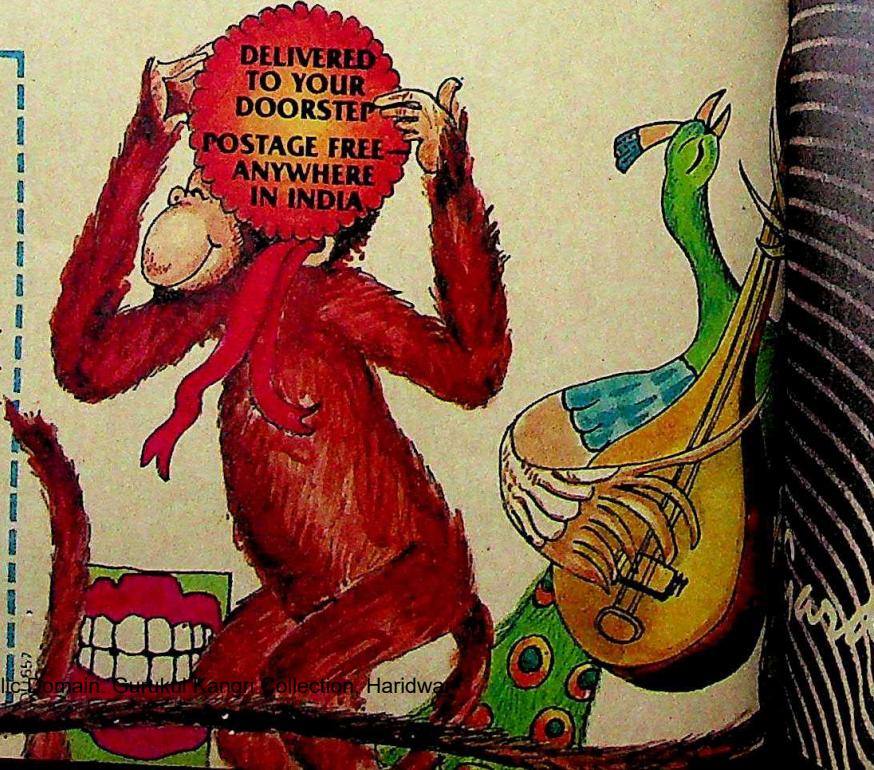
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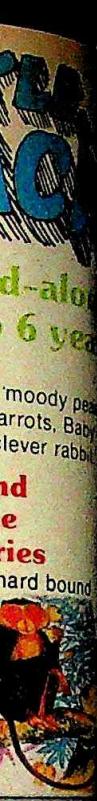
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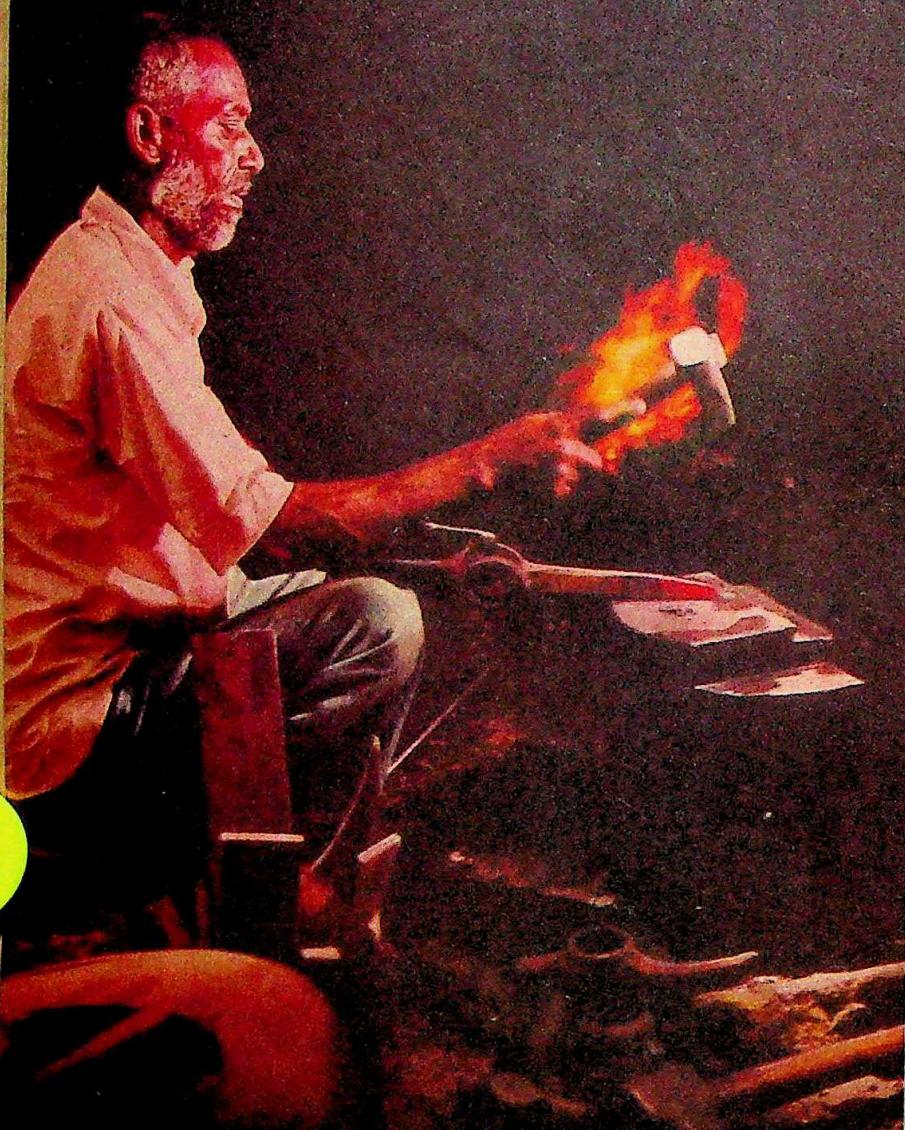
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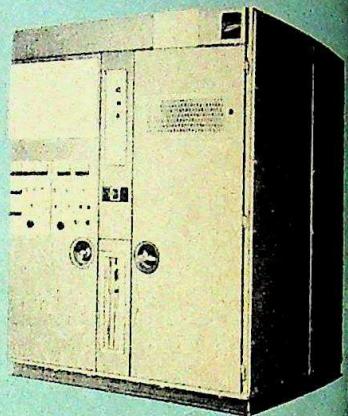
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# The Crossroads

AIR of despondent uncertainty a year ago has given way to jubilation and the 108-year-old offices of the Mill-owners Association (BMA) in Circle were last fortnight suffused with triumph. From the walls of the building, scores of past meetings and planning sessions of chalking out a strategy, now a-month-old strike in Bombay's is virtually over.

about their win over Dr Datta those strike call on January 18, those 62 mills and their work-force to a standstill, the owners were on plans that would bring the to work at full swing. Broken the crippling effects of long-term textile workers have, in the months, been pouring in more than they can be absorbed.

July, over 1.17 lakh workers going up daily for work in city's mills, compared to a decline of around 1.75 October 1981, before they down. Of the 62 mills, 47 are run on a three-shift though in many the majority only partially employed of the mills had set up of two-shift operations four more had accepted workers, but promptly off, claiming the mills be reopened due to financials. But for most mill even the partial return to the industry was reason for celebration, since it was the end of the Samant towards the end of last many insisted that the textile strike signalled of Samant's career as a leader. "As far as the textile concerned, he is coming out," crowed former Kantikumar Podar, the Podar group of which is currently vice-chairman Indian Cotton Mills Federation.

Outside the clothe world too, industry hard-liner was finished boss in the Bombay-

Thane belt where he has reigned supreme for the last half decade. Said the head of a large engineering company that only last year gave its Samant-led work-force a wage hike of over Rs 450: "I think the Samant phenomenon is now clearly on the decline, although some people tell me he's still worshipped by workmen. But how long will they follow his agitational methods when they find they are losing more than they gain?" Even government officials joined the chorus that was joyfully predicting Samant's downfall.

But the widely publicised hopes of Bombay's industrial barons appeared to be mere wishful thinking, premature at best. Outside the textile industry, the labour unionist's dominant hold in the Thane-Belapur industrial belt remains virtually unchanged. In recent months, at least as many workers have joined his struggle for better wages as have left him. Agreements in the last quarter, in fact, show his spectacular success. Last fortnight, Samant was involved in more negotiations, strikes and disputes than any other

labour leader in the city. In the past three months, at least 12 major Samant-led unions have signed wage settlements with hikes in the range of Rs 250 to Rs 490, which will benefit roughly 7,250 workers. Numerous other unions representing workers of small industrial units, employing less than 200 persons have gained wage increases as large. For example:

- Bharat Gears gave its 675 workers hikes in the Rs 310-470 range;
- Amar Dye-Chem, whose 1,800 workers had already got Rs 150 in an interim settlement last year conceded Samant's followers an additional Rs 250;
- Rallis India's pharmaceutical division agreed to pay its 400 workers a Rs 300 wage increase, along with Rs 4,000 each in back wages;
- Britannia's 1,550 workers will receive increases in the Rs 300 to Rs 340 range;
- Fit 'n' Tight Nuts and Bolts will pay its 1,000-strong work-force a Rs 350-390 increase;
- Even clubs like Willingdon Sports and Bombay's Gymkhana have accepted Samant's demand for wage hikes of over Rs 250 for their 700 workers.

**A**LTHOUGH some industrial unions, particularly in Nasik, have undoubtedly left Samant's fold, this is in fact different from the shifts and changes which took place in earlier years. Shopping around for whoever can deliver the goods in the shortest possible time, workers in certain units have constantly shifted loyalties between militant independents like Samant, R.J. Mehta, K.N. Dasgupta, and some politically-affiliated unions like the Lal Nishan group and splinter groups of the Indian National Trade Union Congress.

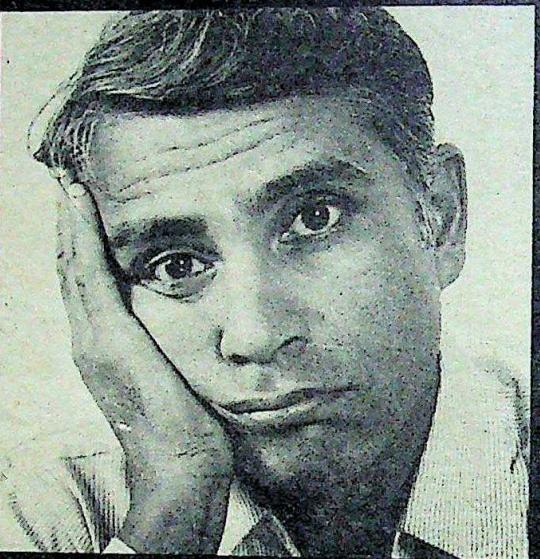
Thus, while Samant has lost his standing in units like Bush India, Chase Bright Steel and three others, involving a combined work-force of 1,800, to Mehta, he has gained a large following in others—Fit 'n' Tight, the Mathadi staff of the Tata Oil Mills, Khatau Junker, and a host of other smaller units. Admits Mehta: "One has to accept that a number of units will remain loyal to the doctor, but I don't believe any fresh unit will go across to him now."

Even in the textile industry, it is by no means clear that Samant is the spent force he is widely believed to be. While the unionist's claim that the strike is not really over has little substance, and workers who



Samant: trial of strength

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one do so only because of the strike on his reputation is difficult. Financially battered by the strike - 21 months in some cases in the Parel-Lalbag-Dadar textile areas willing to accept work at even if it meant the humiliation of Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sangh accepting sharply-tightened terms. But the mood of the outwardly workers remained surprisingly pro-

Union: "We have only returned because of our hunger and suffered a driver at Bombay Dyeing who work three months ago, "but anything they tell you about Datta Samant or joining the take a secret ballot today, it will if the RMMS gets more than 10 per cent." Workers leaving the Mocidas Mills after the morning shift were adamant about their loyalty although they refused to disclose for fear of reprisals.

RMMS membership is swelling workers join up in order to quarry into the mills, resentment traditional textile union appears an all-time high. According official in the Maharashtra labourer's office, their joining the RMMS change the animosity they have for and any loyalty the RMMS obtains forced by immediate economic "Today the recognised bargaining for textilemen has managed to membership of roughly 75,000 last year's figure of 15,000. than consolidate on the failure strike by actively wooing the RMMS has spent the last 18 months mill-owners and further its own members. Fully justifying of betrayal of workers levelled the RMMS has used the strike and absence of workers to push series of agreements with mill-owners effectively results in the retrenchment of 15,000 workers. Work also been raised; "A jobber who worked after 48 looms has now to do the unskilled jobs of four now being performed by two" from the Crown Mills.

Similarly, other proposals opposed by the workers have through. Admits Podar: "The and the cut-backs in staff normally have taken three to have now been done in one." Piramal, chairman of the Mocidas Mills: "I don't think justify the massive hardship he

Digitized by Arya Samaj Foundation Chennai and eGangotri has caused, but the people are fed up with the RMMS too. And that means there is a dangerous vacuum for leadership, so you can't rule out a come-back at some stage for Samant."

But as things stand, it is unlikely that Samant will be able to pull much weight in the industry in the immediate future. Although textile workers undoubtedly continue to swear by his leadership, economic hardship and the huge debts they have run up during the strike period have robbed them of the capacity to act upon his directions.

Last fortnight, however, soon after his return from a hectic electioneering campaign for the Sangli by-election, the labour leader was gearing himself up for another attempt to organise the disarrayed workers. Leaflets stating that the workers had joined the RMMS only because of compulsion were passed around in various mills, and by the end of last fortnight, the unionist had collected over 15,000 signatures to that effect.

To keep up the visibility which is an essential part of his appeal to workers, Samant organised a huge public meeting at Bombay. Commented J.K. Malhotra, an industrialist: "I have seen a lot of Samant and spoken with workers in units where he has lost strikes, and one thing which is very clear to me is that you can't wish him away. He will continue to be around and play a major role in trade unions, but what remains to be seen is whether he can maintain that iron hold over workers which he is famous for."

— CHANDER UDAY SINGH

#### THE MARKETS

## Looking Up

THE NON-RESIDENTS may have temporarily withdrawn to nurse their wounds but the markets have not apparently been affected by their exit. Some scrips, DCM and Escorts to name a couple, have collapsed but that was only expected. DCM had gone up threefold and Escorts nearly twice and if the Reserve Bank had not thrown a spanner in the works, they may have gone up even more. The collapse may be temporary but the astonishing part is that most other leading scrips have held their own. Whether they will continue to do so is another question.

Actually, there is no reason why they should not. Industrial production is picking up and so is investment. Capital approvals including bonus issues and loans are running around 12 per cent ahead of last year, and the industrial output rate is up by 50 per cent. The monsoon has apparently made a disappointing start though it is too early to say. If the monsoon is normal, and if the pick-up in industrial recovery is kept up at a steady

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## ACTIVE STOCKS

	High 1983	Low	Close 5.7.83	Change on Fortnight
Alcoa	17.75	13.25	14.50 (1.00)	
Amoco	37.65	30.50	33.00 (1.50)	
Amoco	36.00	30.50	36.00 1.00	
Amoco	451.50	350.00	451.50 4.50	
Amoco	30.00	25.00	28.00 (1.00)	
Amoco	1,335.00	1,025.00	1,420.00 (115.00)	
Amoco	48.00	37.40	46.00 0.30	
Amoco	312.00	210.00	256.00 (24.00)	
Amoco	26.50	18.05	25.80 (0.70)	
Amoco	56.90	47.10	54.40 (1.70)	
Amoco	93.50	57.50	80.00 (5.00)	
Amoco	36.45	23.75	26.70 (0.05)	
Amoco	31.60	26.00	31.45 0.55	
Amoco	246.50	190.00	223.00 14.00	
Amoco	245.00	195.00	245.00 10.00	
Amoco	872.50	695.00	855.00 (15.00)	
Amoco	63.25	51.00	62.50 (0.50)	
Amoco	99.00	84.00	94.00 (2.00)	
Amoco	105.20	32.31	71.75 (21.25)	
Amoco	184.00	135.00	177.50 7.00	
Amoco	28.10	20.10	25.60 (.30)	
Amoco	29.00	20.00	25.75 (1.00)	
Amoco	35.00	29.00	34.00 nil	
Amoco	82.87	39.75	55.50 (19.00)	
Amoco	70.50	60.50	70.00 nil	
Amoco	31.50	20.00	24.25 (0.75)	
Amoco	23.00	18.05	21.05 (1.45)	
Amoco	52.00	45.00	46.25 (2.25)	
Amoco	40.35	32.10	39.10 0.10	
Amoco	70.00	51.75	68.00 (1.50)	
Amoco	36.86	26.40	34.74 (0.76)	
Amoco	22.80	16.25	22.35 (0.25)	
Amoco	27.40	22.00	26.30 (0.30)	
Amoco	35.00	25.50	34.00 1.00	
Amoco	35.15	30.40	35.00 0.25	
Amoco	87.00	78.00	85.00 1.00	
Amoco	44.85	32.50	33.00 (3.00)	
Amoco	34.90	20.35	32.20 (0.40)	
Amoco	57.50	32.00	39.80 (1.95)	
Amoco	87.00	70.00	84.00 nil	
Amoco	68.10	57.30	63.40 (1.40)	
Amoco	163.00	68.00	94.00 (3.00)	
Amoco	24.50	18.00	23.00 (1.50)	
Amoco	73.00	52.00	66.00 (3.00)	
Amoco	27.30	14.00	25.70 (0.70)	
Amoco	62.00	42.50	60.50 2.25	
Amoco	22.60	15.50	18.25 (2.00)	
Amoco	66.00	42.00	59.00 (5.00)	
Amoco	35.37	22.69	28.00 (2.62)	
Amoco	292.50	225.00	252.50 (17.50)	
Amoco	24.50	19.75	23.50 (0.50)	
Amoco	26.00	20.35	24.10 (1.40)	
Amoco	207.50	160.00	172.50 (7.50)	
Amoco	42.50	34.00	40.00 (2.50)	
Amoco	49.00	40.20	49.00 0.60	
Amoco	376.00	229.00	313.00 (12.00)	
Amoco	46.00	36.00	42.00 (2.75)	
Amoco	52.00	36.50	47.50 (1.50)	
Amoco	183.00	154.00	156.00 (13.50)	
Amoco	25.50	19.00	24.75 (0.50)	
Amoco	42.00	32.20	41.40 0.15	
Amoco	41.50	27.75	35.25 (4.56)	
Amoco	28.25	15.25	23.00 (3.25)	
Amoco	48.00	38.30	46.50 (1.00)	
Amoco	67.00	49.50	54.00 (1.00)	
Amoco	322.50	237.00	303.00 (12.00)	
Amoco	455.00	350.00	427.00 (9.00)	
Amoco	53.30	38.00	53.30 2.55	
Amoco	18.00	16.00	17.25 (0.25)	
Amoco	25.75	21.50	24.60 0.20	
Amoco	26.50	22.00	24.50 0.30	
Amoco	317.00	262.00	315.00 (2.00)	
Amoco	21.50	15.00	20.00 (1.00)	
Amoco	32.50	22.40	31.00 nil	
Amoco	14.10	12.25	12.25 (1.85)	

level, the bulls may be back again in the market.

**Rising Trend:** Three industries are expected to do particularly well in the coming months, namely, aluminium, fertilisers and shipping. Shipping shares have been rather neglected—and for good reasons—but there are signs of recovery in world trade and shipping shares in London and New York are being marked up. Aluminium shares are remarkably steady, though working results of aluminium companies like Hindustan Aluminium have been anything but satisfactory.

This Birla company is said to be toying with the idea of raising its production capacity to 200,000 tonnes a year. Plans for expansion were actually taken in hand when G.D. Birla was alive and are expected to be executed by the present management. Indian Aluminium is diversifying into other fields and the programme will gain momentum when the plans for amalgamation with Mahindra & Mahindra go through, which, however, may take some time. The third private sector aluminium company, Madras Aluminium, has been taken over by the KCP group of Madras and is expected to do much better than it has been doing during the last few years.

Fertiliser companies should gain from the recent slash in prices by 7.5 per cent. Fertiliser imports are also being slashed which should boost share prices further. Most companies have been complaining of poor offtake in the face of imports as well as poor demand. The Government's decision fixing higher retention prices for paddy should also help.

**Belated Awareness:** The Government seems to have at last woken up to the tremendous clout wielded by the financial institutions and has appointed a committee to look into their role vis-a-vis the companies assisted by them. The very fact that the Government seems to be having second thoughts on the question should have a stabilising effect on the stock market and that may be one reason why the committee has been appointed in the first place. It is possible that the refusal of Escorts, and possibly DCM, to transfer shares of non-residents may have also triggered off the appointment.

Then there is the question of inflation. Stock markets always do better during bouts of inflation, for when too much money chases too few goods, it also chases too few scrips. For it is undoubtedly true that there is a big shortage of good scrips in the market, and this may be one reason why buyers have temporarily withdrawn to the sidelines waiting for something to turn up. They may have to wait longer than they think, at least until after the rains when things may be clearer.

## WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

Country	Unit & Currency	TT Selling Rates(Rs)	TT Buying Rates(Rs)
Australia	I As S	8.8231	8.7287
Austria	100 As Sch.	55.9308	55.3472
Bahrain	I Dinar	26.8490	26.6072
Bangladesh	100 Taka	40.1817	39.9958
Canada	I Can \$	8.2074	8.1189
Egypt	I Egypt £	11.6604	11.6018
France	I Fr Franc	1.3101	1.2963
Hong Kong	I HK \$	1.4179	1.4004
Indonesia	100 Rupiah	1.0275	1.0199
Iran	100 Rial	11.7170	11.6296
Italy	100 I Lira	0.6747	0.6684
Japan	100 Jap Yen	4.2149	4.1715
Kenya	I K Shilling	1.1770	1.1664
Kuwait	I Dinar	34.5510	34.2244
Malaysia	I ML S	4.3358	4.3166
Mauritius	I Rupee	0.9882	0.9816
Nepal	I Rupee	0.6956	0.6905
Netherlands	I D Gids	3.5133	3.4765
Pakistan	I Rupee	0.7955	0.7698
Singapore	I Sing S	4.3358	4.3166
Spain	100 Sp Pt	6.9801	6.9125
Sri Lanka	I Rupee	0.4483	0.4366
Sweden	I Sw Kr	1.3201	1.3061
Switzerland	I Sw Fr	4.7573	4.7086
Tanzania	I T Sch.	1.0520	1.0443
Thailand	100 Baht	44.3296	43.9303
UK	I Pound	15.5376	15.3976
USA	I US \$	10.1300	9.9925
UAE	I Dihram	2.7196	2.6995
USSR	I Rouble	14.0106	13.9076
W. Germany	I DM	3.9355	3.8941

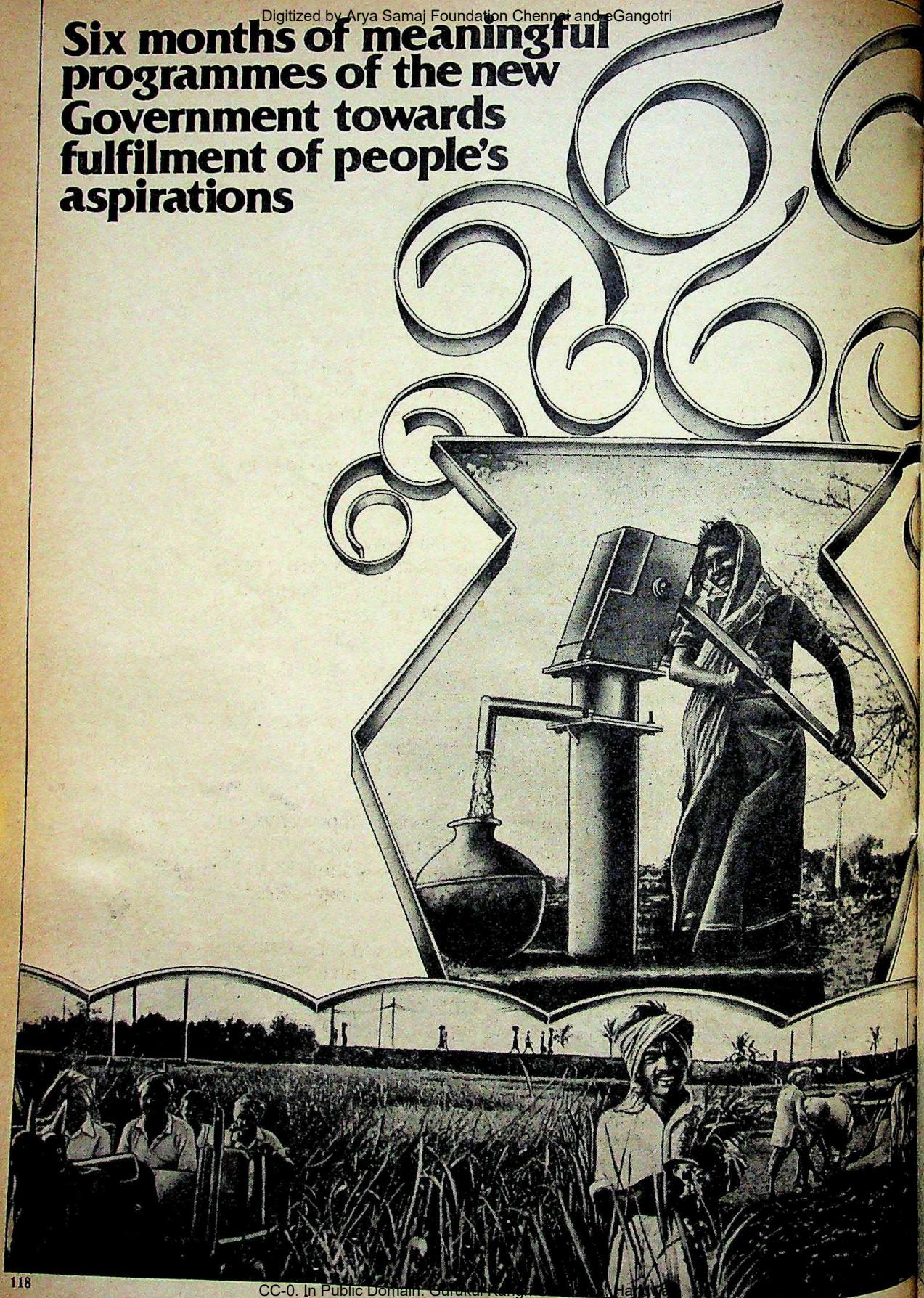
These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo, Ltd., New Delhi and quoted between the banks on 7.7.83

## ECONOMIC TRENDS

	Latest	Change on month
<b>PRICES</b>		
ET Commodity Price Index*		
July 5, 1983	266.8	4.0
Cereals	268.5	1.8
Chemicals	375.2	17.3
Industrial Fibres	188.6	(2.6)
Metals	358.2	nil
Sugar	214.2	(6.4)
Textile Yarn	220.3	2.8
Vegetable Oils	317.6	7.0
Gold, standard,		
July 5, 1983	1,770.00 (105.00)	
(Rs per 10 gm)		
Silver, .999,		
July 5, 1983	3,300.00 (365.00)	
(Rs per kg)		
<b>SHARES</b>		
ET Share Price Index*		
July 5, 1983	262.9	(7.3)
Cement	272.9	5.4
Chemicals	208.3	1.3
Engineering	446.4	(50.1)
Fertilisers	210.1	4.1
Man-made Fibres	398.1	18.1
Paper	526.5	7.0
Rubber Goods	176.2	(3.3)
<b>MONEY</b>		(per cent)
Money Supply, May 27, 1983	1.5	
Bank Deposits	1.4	
Foreign Exchange Assets	10.8	

\* 1969-70 = 100

# Six months of meaningful programmes of the new Government towards fulfilment of people's aspirations



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— Priority for completing the on going irrigation projects. Rs. 89 crores provided for large and medium irrigation projects. Cauvery basin projects get Rs. 84 crores. 400 new tanks to be constructed at a cost of Rs. 15 crores.

**Scarcity Relief Works:**— The immediate task was to tackle the drought problem on top priority — over Rs. 50 crores spent on scarcity works - wages of labour in scarcity works enhanced from Rs. 5 to 6.50. Ministers have been nominated to supervise relief works in each district.

**Industries:**— Stress on small scale industries. Programme to start one thousand small industrial units every month. More help for cottage industries.

**Decentralisation:**— A new bill to establish Panchayat Raj Institutions to work vigorously in the state. Election process is set in motion for holding elections, to town and city municipalities and Corporations. Voting rights conferred to all those completing 18 years of age; 20% seats in local bodies reserved for women.

**Lok Ayukta:**— A bold measure to cleanse public life in the State by wiping out corruption.

**Protection to backward classes and minorities:**— The Second Backward Classes Commission and a Minorities Commission have been established. Rs. 12 crores provided for the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe corporation.

**Education:**— A bill to bring about a comprehensive improvement in the field of education is ready. Capitation fee for Karnataka students seeking admission to Medical Colleges abolished. SC and ST students obtaining ranks in degree and Post graduate levels to get direct employment under Government.

**Employment:**— Age limit for entry into Government service for stipendiary graduates, local candidates and others enhanced.

**Primacy to Kannada:**— Kannada made the sole administrative language in the State; A committee to supervise its implementation appointed; No more English medium schools to be permitted.

These and many other programmes of peoples' welfare — like the house sites for the houseless and siteless, development of social forestry, wide scale afforestation and Antyodaya are indicative of the State's march on the right path towards progress and prosperity.

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- We have now concluded an agreement with Kone Corporation for manufacture of a wide range of Lifts and Escalators of the latest design in India. The Kone Corporation is an international Engineering Group with Headquarters in Helsinki.

- The Solar Energy Division made further progress during the year... the energy audit staff of specialists in this division is now able to undertake major jobs for installing energy conservation systems.
- Best & Crompton acquired 100% interest in Krest Development & Leasing Ltd.
- Our Contracting Division has diversified its activities to include cross country piping work and design and installation systems for ports, thermal plants and coal washeries.
- In Saudi Arabia... two prestigious contracts for Rural Electrification totalling over Rs. 300 million.
- A major break-through in financing overseas contracts at lower international rates of interest was achieved with the help of the Exim Bank. We have now Euro dollar loans limit of about Rs. 4 crores to finance our overseas operations.
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# Nursing Aches

WHEN P. Karuna Devi, trainee nurse at the private Durgabai Deshmukh Hospital (DDH), was run over by the Government Gandhi Hospital at Hyderabad following a complaint of persistent pain in the abdomen, little did she know that she would be setting an intriguing pattern. Not fewer than 13 other nurses followed suit during the next 24 days, creating a flutter in the city's medical circles. They were totally unable to explain the epidemic of appendicitis.

What has surprised medical experts is that such an epidemic could have broken out in the reputedly cleaner environs of a well-managed hospital. Strangely, DDH nurses did not contact any of the health authorities until a press report had appeared in the Telugu daily. They then closed down for a fortnight, and the last few nurses left, a team of plumbers arrived to fix the entire water supply system in the camp. The suspicion fell on the Hyderabad Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Board (HMWSB) but a thorough examination of the pipelines indicated no cause of the epidemic.

**Contaminated:** The DDH water for its kitchens and from a well on the campus. Other sources are the unprocessed supply from the Hussainsagar lake and the HMWSB. Analyses from all three sources, conducted by the National Institute of Nutrition (NIN), showed that the well water was not fit for drinking or washing, unless it was chlorinated. The Hussainsagar water was also, though enough, heavily contaminated with bacteria and unfit for use.

It is well known that water from Hussainsagar is polluted by bacteria and various chemicals released into it by industrial effluents. Yet institutions like the DDH, the Andhra University and the state board for control of water pollution allow its use for bathing and gardening. Admits DDH resident Dr. G. Lakshmi Pathy: "There is no way to check whether the water is fit for drinking and cooking. We have to apply it to the baths in the hostel, for safety, we are cutting off this

though all the cases were recorded as accidents, according to NIN Director Dr. S. Bamji, there is no evidence to sug-

gest that this can occur as a result of drinking contaminated water. Surgeons at the government hospital, where the trainee nurses were admitted because they could not afford treatment at the DDH, said they found the appendices inflamed. However, Dr Prabhakar Rao, chief medical officer of the corporation believes that a combination of factors could have triggered off the rash of appendicitis cases. Says Rao: "There are positive indications to show that water was polluted, food contaminated, and there was bacterial infection. But it can be confirmed only after all the loose ends are tied."

**Allegations:** Sources at the DDH who do not want to be identified allege that surgeons of the government hospital concluded too

hastily that the nurses were suffering from inflamed appendicitis. A histopathological examination of the organs removed would have confirmed this, they conjecture. However, according to the government hospital's resident medical officer, Dr P. Shiva Raman, one organ was preserved and examined, but yielded no unusual data. Said he: "If more specimens were available, it might have been possible to study the effect of the disease on the tissues of the body for clues as to how appendicitis struck the victims."

In the absence of such concrete evidence, an identification of the cause of the epidemic might become a complicated task. However, the allegation has been opposed by other medical experts. Said a leading Hyderabad surgeon, who sensed a private-versus-government hospital conflict in this controversy: "It is difficult for even the most experienced doctors to distinguish between the symptoms of acute appendicitis from those of other abdominal complications. Once the abdomen is opened, the appendix is removed even if it is slightly inflamed." In an attempt to close any further investigation, they recently issued a statement that for want of any evidence, it is presumed that an unidentified virus may be responsible for the outbreak.

While the theory of viral appendicitis floated by the DDH has excited a lot of interest in the medical fraternity, nothing has been proved yet, nor has any virus been isolated or identified. Quipped an epidemiologist: "Somebody in the hospital is angling for a Nobel Prize, not in medicine, but in creative thinking."

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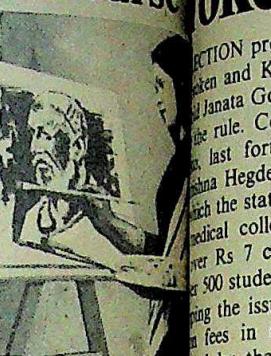
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# BROKEN Promises

**ECTION promises are made to be broken** and Karnataka's six-month-old Janata Government is no exception to the rule. Contrary to its election last fortnight Chief Minister S. Krishna Hegde announced a scheme which the state's eight privately managed medical colleges will continue to collect Rs 7 crore as capitation fee per 500 students admitted annually, despite the issue of the Rs 15 crore capitation fees in engineering colleges—ruled by the Supreme Court—the Janata bowed to popular pressure by an ordinance preventing new colleges from collecting capitation fees.

This decision comes as a blow to demands for the abolition of capitation fees in the state, which have resulted in the mushroom growth of privately run medical and engineering colleges (see *INDIA TODAY* June 15, 1983). Salient features of the new policy are:

i) Privately owned medical colleges allowed to admit 465 students from Karnataka, including foreigners. Indians will be charged Rs 1.5 lakh per seat, foreign students will contribute Rs 2 lakh each.

ii) In the Bangalore-based St. Mark's Medical College, over which the Janata has no control, the other seven medical colleges will admit 10 students each on a merit-cum-merit basis after charging Rs 50,000 as no-interest fixed deposit for By the time this Rs 35 lakh is deposited, the deposits will have yielded the amount Rs 70 lakh at current rates.

iii) Number of admissions in government medical colleges, made on a merit basis, in the newly opened Bangalore medical colleges will be increased to 15 from 10. Colleges will be allowed to charge a reduced tuition fee of Rs 5,000 (excluding charges) instead of Rs 3,000, yielding an additional annual revenue of Rs 20 lakh.

iv) Privately run medical colleges will be allowed to enjoy the clinical facilities of hospitals without payment.

**Reaction:** Predictably, the Janata received severe criticism from all quarters. Leading the attack is the MP which had earlier faced bitter defeat from Janata MP's and Hegde—for collecting money by permitting new medical colleges to be opened in the state. Said Molley, the soft-spoken leader of

the 81-member Congress(I) Legislative Party: "The Janata Government is in league with private managements. I am yet to confirm whether the collusion was for some monetary considerations. But the decision is contrary to Janata's promises. It has been taken only to oblige vested interests in the state."

Added K.G. George, general secretary of the Indian Youth Congress(I): "By allowing the evil practice of capitation fee, the Janata Government has confirmed that their criticism against us when we were in power was politically motivated and opportunistic. If Hegde meant business, he could have done it like



***Hegde's decision is a blow to popular demands for the abolition of capitation fees, which have resulted in the mushroom growth of privately run medical and engineering colleges.***

the Andhra Pradesh Government."

The Government's decision also came as a major disappointment for its major supporters BJP and CPI(M) who had actively campaigned for abolition of the capitation fee during the January assembly poll. Said Dr V.S. Acharya, leader of the 18-member BJP group in the Assembly: "Allowing the managements to charge donations from local students amounts to taking capitation fees through the back door. The Janata Government has gone back on its promises given to the electorate." Concurred N.K. Upadhyaya, the state's CPI(M) leader: "The decision is totally unjust. It will impose a heavy burden on the medical students."

What surprised the Janata Party's well-wishers was that soon after assuming office, Hegde had promised to phase out capitation fees. Later, he directed state officials to prepare a white paper on admissions to both medical and engineering colleges. The 100-page report, which was subsequently tabled in the Assembly, was highly critical of the previous government. On instructions from the Government, the Directorate of Health Education had also prepared three alternative schemes under which capitation fees could be abolished by making each medical college a viable unit with marginal initial subsidies.

However, neither the schemes nor an earlier decision of the Gundu Rao government to abolish capitation fees by 1986-87 were considered by the new Cabinet.

**Party Connections:** Janata leaders refute allegations that the connections of certain party members with medical colleges have contributed to the new policy. In fact M.R. Jayaram, chairman of M.S. Ramaiah Medical College, Bangalore, was Janata's nominee for the 1978 assembly elections; and Irrigation Minister H.D. Deve Gowda is close to the management of the Bangalore-based Kempegowda Institute of Medical Sciences.

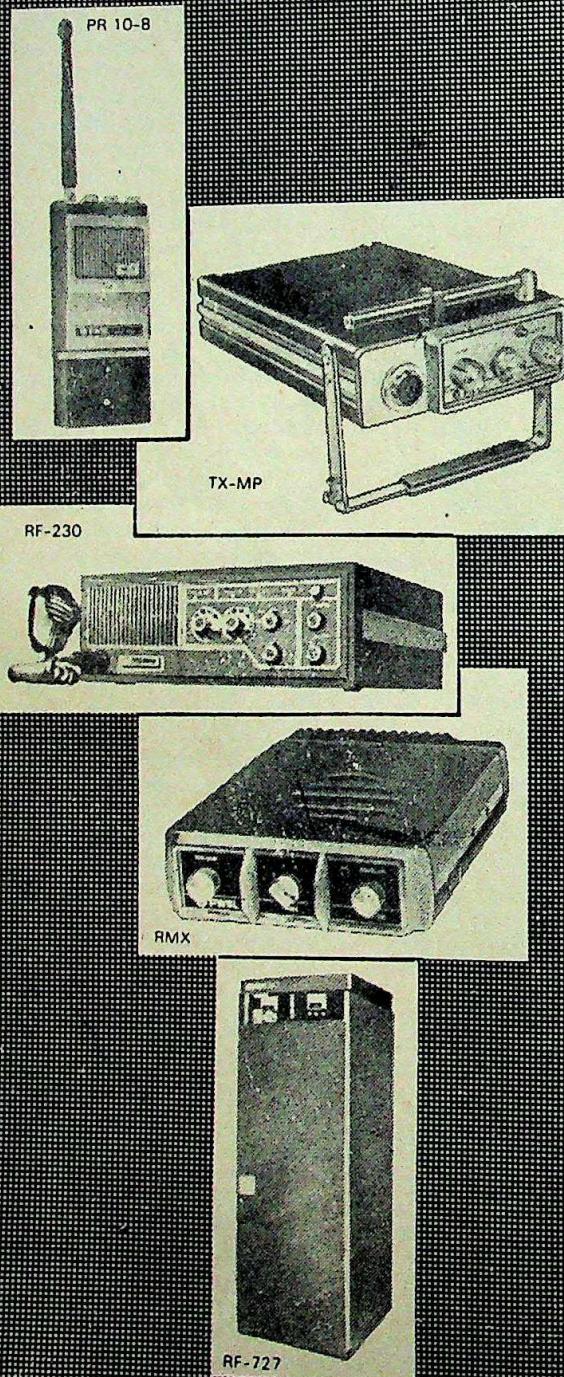
Hegde insists that his new policy is an improvement over the earlier ones. It has, he claims, created 20 per cent extra merit-cum-reservation seats, abolished 149 additional seats illegally granted by the previous government and surrendered 10 seats meant for chief minister's nominees in each of the three Bangalore-based colleges. Moreover, the new policy provides for a government screening and supervision of the funds collected by way of capitation fees.

Clearly the state Government's inability to abolish the capitation fee stems from its weak financial position. According to Finance Department estimates, it will require at least Rs 120 crore for buildings and other infrastructural facilities, and recurring expenses of over Rs 7 crore annually. With severe drought conditions and taxation reaching saturation point, the Government is finding it difficult to impose additional taxation. Admitted Hegde during his much publicised press conference: "It is the best that we can do at the present, considering the students' interests and those of the state."

But the "present decision", as *Deccan Herald*, a pro-government daily, put it, "will please no one except the proprietors of the capitation fee institutions and affluent parents out to secure a medical or engineering degree for their sons or daughters by hook or by crook".

—PRABHU CHAWLA

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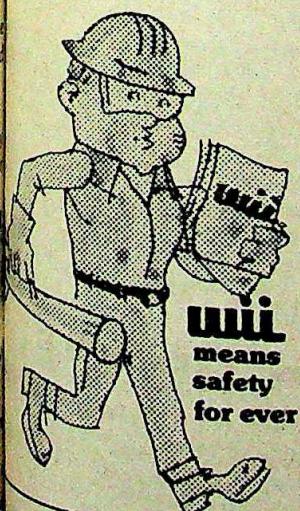
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# Aces On Court

**I**N GLORIOUS sunshine, Wimbledon '83 crowned two worthy left-handed champions—John McEnroe and Martina Navratilova. The one-sided matches—McEnroe lost only one set, while Navratilova lost only 25 games in the seven matches each played—were a tribute to their great skills, accentuated by the unexpected defeats of highly seeded players like Jimmy Connors and Chris Evert-Lloyd.

The exit of Connors robbed the championship of what would undoubtedly have been an attractive final. The electric Connors fell to an inspired Kevin Curren on the first

Purecell and finally Curren—in a Centre Court match which will be remembered long—fell to the high-cheek-boned Kiwi. With his shirt hanging out of his shorts, and his hair tied down with a bandanna, Lewis reminded one of a marauding Red Indian warrior. One more scalp was all that Lewis needed to reach the summit. Emotionally spent, Lewis was at the dizzy height of a grand final, with more than thousand telegrams wishing him luck. But across the net loomed the figure of John McEnroe, with his temper tamed and his game tuned to the highest pitch of his rich talent. The hopes of a

monson, last year's unseeded semi-strong, fierce and bursting with aggression made Vijay's sleek and deadly game ragged and rusty, and defeated straight sets. At 30 years of age, Vijay, finding it difficult to keep up with his business interests and the increasing demands of training for top class tournaments.

**Magic Memories:** To the Court, Ramesh Krishnan brought back memories of the old Krishnan magic. The face, the silk smooth perfectly timed serve confirmed that the Krishnan legend run true. Pitted against the flamboyant mercurial eighth-seeded Gerulaitis, Ramesh seemed poised for victory when he went ahead, and led by four games to one second set. But a reluctance for all out allowed Gerulaitis to regroup his forces and exploit Ramesh's lost rhythm and confidence.

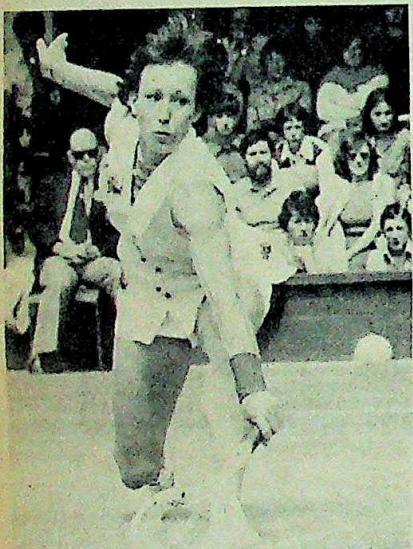
Even then, a bit of luck in the break of the third set, may have swung the match in Krishnan's favour. There was solace in the fact that Ramesh had shown considerable improvement and had thrilled the Court with his artistry and impeccable manners. Krishnan's continuing dedication bound, sooner or later, to result in a repeat as Lewis enjoyed at Wimbledon. Menon, narrowly defeated in the main qualifying rounds, got into the main draw of 128 as a lucky loser as players dropped out.

The first Tuesday of the qualifying rounds at Roehampton saw a total letdown of Indian hopes at Wimbledon. Dinesh could collect only three games from the fifth seeded Spaniard, while Vidya could not collect even a game from Croft of Britain. In an era when junior players soon after they leave their cribs, accompanied by coaches and trainers, cruel to send Indian youngsters to themselves in what often turns out to be a traumatic experience.

The Americans—there were more than 50 of them in the men's singles draw—continued to dominate tennis. The Swedes in the wake of the great Borg, as the title was won by Edberg, a single player, and the Czech tennis machine continues to churn out highly competitive stars.

The French coaching programme to be bearing fruit—they provided an added winner in the girls' singles, Paras. What is most exciting is the prospect of a great Australian revival. Spearheaded by the tough and talented Pat Cash, the home of some of the golden Australian Roche, Newcombe and Rosewall will provide the spark that is sure to set the dry Australian talent alight.

—NAresh KUMAR at Wim-

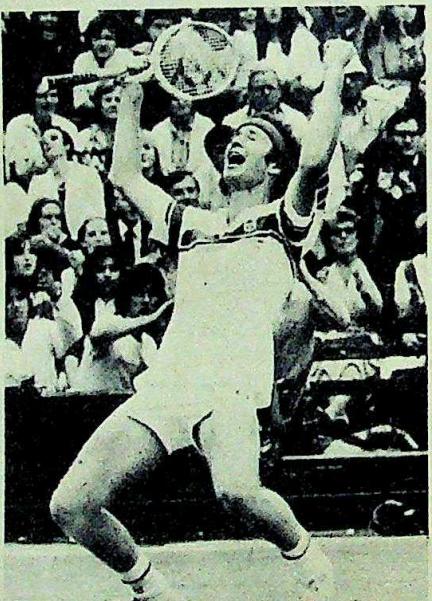


Navratilova and McEnroe: worthy champions

Saturday of the championship. Curren served at a speed beyond human reflexes to notch up an unbelievable 33 service aces.

There was a note of high expectancy during the first week as seeds like Connors, Vilas, Clerc, Denton, and Gerulaitis fell like dominoes, and McEnroe struggled to keep the lid on his temper "one mouth fault" away from suspension. Odizor of Nigeria, nick-named "The Duke", a god-fearing combination of African rhythm and American aggression, won the hearts of the spectators and the media. Here was the fairy tale they were all looking for.

**Unexpected Finalist:** The champagne popped in Auckland, as suddenly, after being out in the cold at number 91 in the rankings, Chris Lewis found a new well of faith and resolve in his game. Odizor,



contest worthy of a Wimbledon final faded after the first few games and McEnroe firmly grabbed his second Wimbledon title.

**Powerful Play:** Martina Navratilova dominated the ladies singles in a manner that has seldom been seen in the last 35 years at Wimbledon. Her pulverising service, the awesome power of her shots, and her amazing speed of foot, seemed far beyond the feminine compass of her opponents. The defeat of Evert-Lloyd—on the final leg of a million dollar grand slam bonanza—at the hands of Kathy Jordan, left Navratilova without a searching test.

The Indian chapter was restricted to one sunny afternoon. Sadly, it signalled a substantial decline in Vijay Amritraj's game, after he has for so many years thrilled Wimbledon with his spectacular play and near wins against Borg and Connors. Mark Ed-

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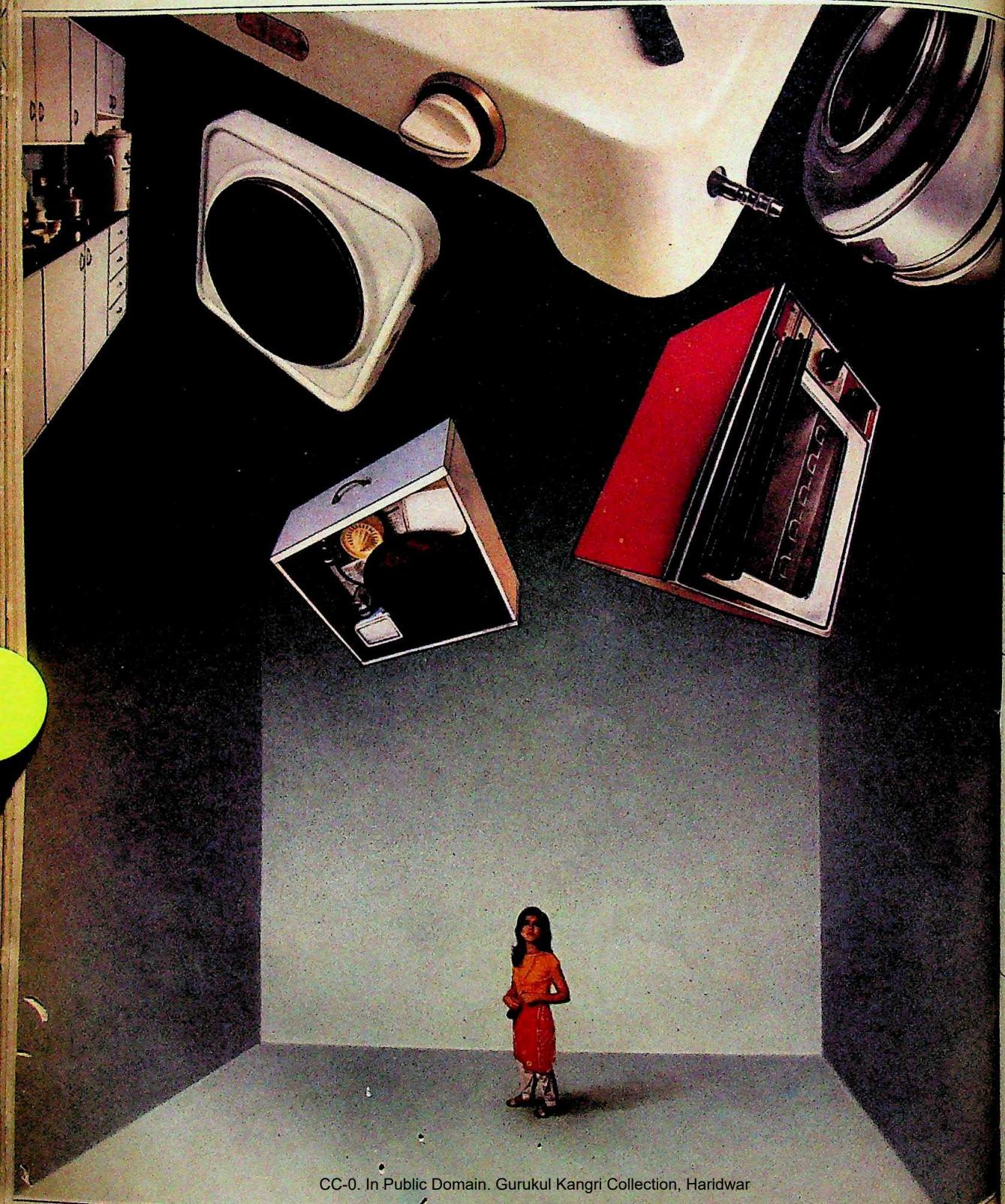


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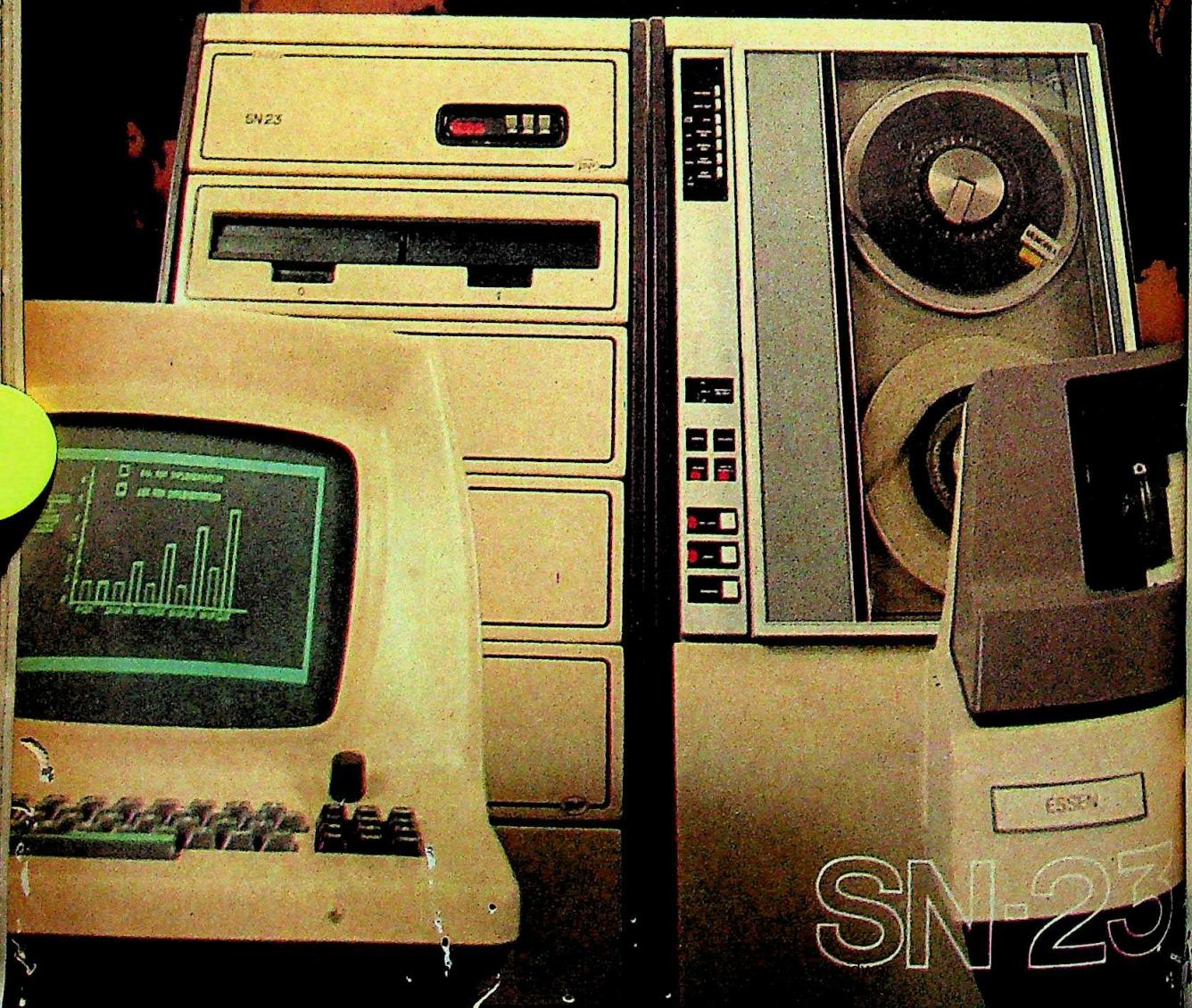
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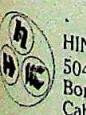


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WEST BENGAL

# The Culture Crisis

Henceforth no minister should issue statements about apasanskriti (cultural depravity) or even attempt to define culture.

—Jyoti Basu, West Bengal chief minister.

**W**HATEVER else it may be criticised for, the six-year-old reign of the Marxist-led Left Front in West Bengal can hardly be accused of tampering with the state's vast output of art and literature. But no longer. After steering clear of each other for some years, art and politics have been on a collision course lately, and the unsuspecting Marxists are getting the flak even before they can prepare their defence. With very little influence over Bengal's established artists and writers, who are overwhelmingly non-Left, the Jyoti Basu Government is fighting a battle on the cultural front which it is sure to lose.

Ironically, the first shot was fired not by any bigwig in the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M), the senior partner of the Front but by Jatin Chakravarty, the short, voluble and cigar-chomping minister of state for public works, who is also a leading light of another Front-partner, the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP). Last month, Chakravarty used his department's authority over Mahajati Sadan, an auditorium in central Calcutta, to debar the energetic Calcutta-based pop singer Usha Uthup from singing there. Some of her discs for Bombay films (*Disco Dancer*) have been runaway successes (INDIA TODAY, June 30).

**Provocative Move:** Uthup's natural singing style enables her to vibe with the audience, and her listeners occasionally go berserk while responding to her sizzling beat. Nor is this the first time that she has been prevented by the management from singing at a particular auditorium: the Birla-owned Kala Mandir banned her two years ago. Chakravarty too could have kept her out quietly. But instead he issued a statement alleging that Uthup's kind of "disco music" was in "low taste", and those who listened to it "also betrayed a low taste".

It was Chakravarty's turn to face the music. Uthup hired top counsel Subrata Roychowdhury and slapped a Rs 20-lakh defamation suit on the minister. The Marxists, who are now in an uneasy alliance with other Front partners following their failure to achieve electoral understanding with them in the panchayat elections in April, ap-

parently enjoyed Chakravarty's discomfiture for a while. But before long some of the criticism against Chakravarty began recoiling on them, and the party, while avoiding to give the impression of coming to Chakravarty's rescue, opened yet another front in the cultural battle.

On June 25, the entire CPI-M ministe-



Uthup (top), Chakravarty (left) and Gangopadhyay: unseemly controversies

rial contingent stayed away from a function to confer the state Government-instituted Bankim Award for literary work on Sunil Gangopadhyay, 50, journalist, formerly bohemian poet and one of the most successful novelists in Bengal. Gangopadhyay was chosen for the Rs 10,000 award by a committee set up under the Department of Higher Education, for which the minister-in-charge is Sambhu Ghosh.

Though Ghosh took care to be

present and presided over the ceremony, absentees included Kanti Biswas, minister for primary and secondary education, who had been billed as the chief guest, and Prabhas Phadikar, the minister in charge of information. Both Biswas and Phadikar were merely responding to a statement published in *Ganashakti*, the CPI-(M) party eveninger, a day earlier, the decision to honour Gangopadhyay, bitterly opposed by the Democratic Writers and Artists' Association, the supreme unit on the cultural front.

The Association described Gangopadhyay's opus, *Shei Shamay* (Those That Came), as "contrary to Bengal's progressive heritage". In *Shei Shamay*, Gangopadhyay depicted his brilliant main character, Kumar, as an illegitimate child. Kumar resembled Kaliprasanna Sinha, doyen of 19th century Bengal reawakening, who translated the *Mahabharata* into Bengali and pioneered a highly colloquial prose style.

Gangopadhyay has, however, having based his first cast on a rigid mould, but the resemblance could have been accidental. And this time the Marxists were on a stronger rising in defence of the representative tradition which the Left theoretician earlier generation would have dismissed as "feudal". Said Indranath Bandopadhyay, general secretary of the association, "In book designer, essayist and the party missar on cultural affairs in alternative denounce the anarchist tendencies of Sunil's works. In this play: 'We novel, he has blackened some to isolate the most progressive elements a large extent Bengal's history."

**Embarrassed Partners:** Of culture, Marxist boycott of the award was "powerful." In function found the Forward has been a hiding its face in embarrassment, the absence of Biswas, Kumar Bose, minister for Education, appeared on the stage. Ghosh kept their addresses briefly, refraining from any reference to Gangopadhyay, confined themselves to a discussion on Bankim Chattopadhyay, the 19th century literary stalwart of Bengal.

The controversy over the award ballooned a day later when Saroj Mukherjee, powerful CPI(M) state secretary and man of the Left Front committee, announced that he would refer the matter to the committee. Ananda Bazar Patrika, where Gangopadhyay works as an editor, picked up the cudgel later. It advised: "It is no use raking up old issues what the Democratic Writers and

Digitized by Arya Samaj Foundation Chennai and eGangotri sed. In a recent Jatra production on the life of Lenin, the great helmsman and his wife, Krupskaya, were shown to be weeping over each other's shoulder.

**Sharp Contrast:** The present cleavage between artists and leftists stands in stark contrast to Bengal's cultural history during the '40s and the '50s when an entire generation of new writers, painters, musicians and theatre personalities rallied behind the Communist Party on a broad anti-Fascist platform. They included poets of the stature of Subhas Mukhopadhyay, theatre personalities like Sombhu Mitra and Utpal Dutt, painters like Chittaprasad and musicians like Ravi Shankar. The fringes of the movement were peopled by such outstanding film makers of a later generation as Ritwik Ghatak and Mrinal Sen. And the movement played a vanguard role in India, bringing in its vortex eminent men of letters like Kaifi Azmi, the poet, Mulk Raj Anand, the novelist, and K.A. Abbas, the film maker.

Commenting on the present barrenness in the leftist camp, reminisces Mrinal Sen: "Perhaps there was something unique about the '40s when it was easier for people of various disciplines and beliefs to come under one umbrella, that of opposing Fascism. Movements alone bring art and politics together. They have drifted apart now because there is no movement now." True, but the installation of the Left Front itself was the culmination of a decade-long movement marked by violence, repression and heroism.

Apparently, no creative artiste worth his salt has found it to be inspiring enough.

On the other hand, those among the writers with a mass following now betray a stubborn hostility towards the leftists, thus denying them the greatest advantage they traditionally enjoyed in Bengal—a large army of fellow-travellers. An example is Samarendra Bose, a novelist of great passion and popularity, who was a cardholding member till 1955. He incurred the wrath of the communists in the late '60s when the

masses began to find his dissection of the sexual attitudes of the bourgeoisie quite titillating. Says Bose: "When I look around the political scene in West Bengal, I don't find a single leader who is eligible to talk on education and culture. Sorry. The Left Front has no such thing as a culture of its own."

**Confused Stand:** As a matter of fact, old-timers in the CPI(M), such as Jyoti Basu, Mukherjee and Abdullah Rasool, the 79-year-old party veteran who was for a long time its chief cultural spokesman, never

applied their minds to the task of formulating a cultural policy. Consequently, there is hardly any unanimity in the party about what is "desirable art" and what is not.

Basu admitted it in an address to writers and artists in 1979 when he said: "Which work of literature is good according to our yardstick? Which play is desirable? Which music is ennobling? Which are the works that we should project? These are very complex issues. Complex, and confusing." Basu and his comrades obviously lack the courage of conviction with which Stalin, for instance, had denounced Dostoyevsky. Stalin said about him: "A great writer and a great reactionary. We are not publishing him because he has a bad influence on youth. But a great writer."

The Bengal Marxists, on the other hand, have not made up their mind even on Rabindranath Tagore. Till the '50s, Tagore used to be their anathema: he was even criticised for his birth in a landlord family. The Marxists today say they have revised their stand on Tagore. Yet Tagore's Bengali primer, *Sahaj Path* (Easy Reading), was dropped from school curricula last year on the imaginary ground that it was not sufficiently scientific. Similarly, Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay and Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, the two greatest novelists of Bengal, have been damned and praised by the communists in rapid succession.

**Popular Vindication:** The CPI(M) now finds itself in a quandary. "Invasion of the Coca-Cola culture," quipped one section of the Marxists about Uthup's body-swinging songs. "But popsongs are not bad per se; they are born out of a spirit of revolt against the formal music of the bourgeoisie," replied another section. And neither section had any control over Uthup's popularity. Her latest album sold nearly 20,000 copies whereas Ajit Pandey, the 'mass singer' immensely popular with the Marxists, who had cut a disc two years ago, sold barely 2,000 copies.

Even the Marxist-dominated Painters' Forum does not attract talented artists; while its members keep on drawing heroic, and boring, musclemen on revolutionary book jackets, the centre of gravity of Bengali art has shifted to "uncommitted" painters like Bikash Bhattacharjee and Ganesh Pyne.

And now, to compound the CPI(M)'s problem, it has got among its apologists a minister like Chakravarty who, apart from commissioning 79 uncouth statues in six years (including those of Marx and Engels) recently shocked Calcuttans by painting the tip of the Sahid Minar red overnight. Film maker Satyajit Ray provided the epilogue to the controversy when he remarked: "The man who put that red colour on the dome of the monument is now talking of culture. What right has he got?"

—SUMIT MITRA



Bhattacharya: tough task

...understands of Bengali culture, ...with books that are unsaleable, ...the people who had systematically ...to tarnish the images of the ...names in Bengal. One thing ...that this criticism (of Gango ...the handiwork of a clutch of im ...stated, incompetent and jealous ...masquerading as writers. Un ...their intention is to replace the ...brush with the party flag."

...flexing its muscle in public, ...awareness—however belatedly ...started dawning on the CPI(M) ...the party had a cultural poli ...day, it has none. Departing from ...old stand that the party's cultural ...should be decided from issue to ...therjee, for the first time, ordered a ...cultural subcommittee of the par ...colloquial ...Bengal state committee to draft a ...per on culture". Significantly, the ...however, in the subcommittee is the ...former information minister, ...Bhattacharya, a man of gentle ...and this time ...erudition whose five-year-long ...a stronger office was marked by a rare degree ...representative ...

...theoretical ...Bhattacharya told INDIA TODAY that the ...have dismissed ...ture was on its way and would be ...h Bandopadhyay the state committee soon. But ...associations were beset with a basic problem: ...and the party in Bengal have been unable to ...ural affairs in alternative cul ...urist tended to a harassed ...In this party: "We have ...akened some to isolate the right ...ave elements a large extent on ...nal front. But, in ...Partners of culture, they ...of the award-winning." In plain ...the Forward has been a vast ...embarrassing the party ...Biswas, ...Biswas, ...minister for ...in the stage ...addresses ...patronage, any ...versely, the camp ...gopadhyay ...writers sympath ...Left forces is ...void of talent.

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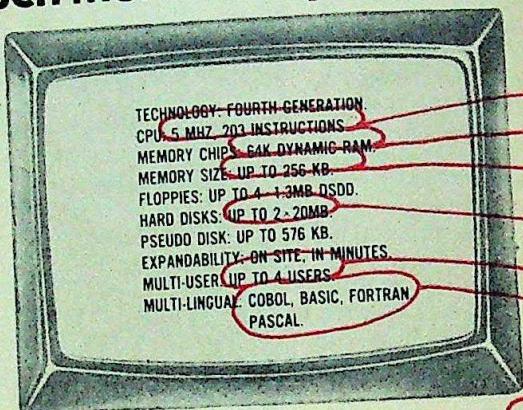
...er the award-winning." In plain ...the Forward has been a vast ...embarrassing the party ...Biswas, ...Biswas, ...minister for ...in the stage ...addresses ...patronage, any ...versely, the camp ...gopadhyay ...writers sympath ...Left forces is ...void of talent.

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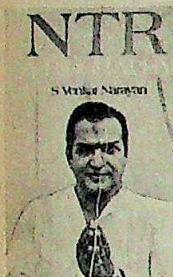


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# Star Trek

**NTR: A BIOGRAPHY**  
by S. VENKAT NARAYAN  
Vikas  
Price: Rs 75; Pages: 133



THERE is a big vacuum in Indian political literature. It is poor in political biographies of contemporary leaders. There is a surfeit of biographical studies of Jawaharlal Nehru, Mahatma Gandhi and Indira Gandhi but there is no biography yet of Lal Bahadur Shastri and there is only one biography of Morarji Desai. Few of the chief ministers have inspired Indian scholars or journalists to write their political biographies. This is in spite of the fact that developmental progress in the states is the result of dynamic leadership of a number of first generation chief ministers.

S. Venkat Narayan has written a quick biography of N.T. Rama Rao, perhaps the most astonishing political phenomenon in India of the 1980s. He is not the first matinee idol to storm a Congress citadel in India; that honour goes to MGR of Tamil Nadu. But N.T. Rama Rao spearheaded a political campaign in Andhra Pradesh in 1982-83 which probably has no precedent in India's political history.

As Venkat Narayan puts it: "Between June 14, when Rama Rao set out on the first phase of campaign tours, and January 3, when he arrived in Tirupati to make the last speech of the campaign, he had travelled for a total of 70 days, reaching every nook and corner of the state and covering a total distance of 35,000 km. He was seen and heard by an estimated 3 crore people — a record for the history books. No man had travelled in the state so extensively in living memory; no man had spoken so eloquently, articulating the frustrations and aspirations of his people; no man was received with so much warmth, love and affection; and no man had so electrified so many people with his oratory and swayed the emotions of his people so much that they could do anything for him. Not since Mahatma Gandhi, anyway."



NTR : chronicled

**Regional Politics:** N.T. Rama Rao is probably a path-breaker in Indian politics. The stunning electoral victory of the Telugu Desam party in Andhra Pradesh has brought regional political parties on the political map of India. If regional parties come to occupy the centre-stage of Indian politics in the next 10 years, N.T. Rama Rao will be recognised as the trend-setter.

He is excellent meat for any competent biographer. Venkat Narayan has only done a preliminary piece of work. In this short book, written in racy journalistic style, one gets glimpses of a remarkable man, a workaholic, a man of puritan habits, deeply traditional in his outlook and yet capable of rising to the varied challenges of life. During the campaign he often shaved, bathed and washed his own clothes by the roadside and ate with people squatting on the floor.

After becoming chief minister he took sanyas by which he means renunciation of worldly pleasures. Travelling in second-class, living in a modest hut at Vijayawada during the inaugural session of the Telugu Desam party, discarding all kinds of ostentation, NTR has sought to recapture some of the simple Gandhian values of our political life which have got lost in the *nouveau riche* political milieu of the Indira Gandhi period.

**Enigmatic Figure:** This sleek little volume will whet the readers' appetite for more about the man who has captured the imagination of millions of poor in Andhra Pradesh, and indeed the rest of the country. There is a good deal in the book about NTR's celluloid life, a short account of Congress rule in Andhra Pradesh for more than 30 years and a quick assessment of NTR's first 150 days as a chief minister of Andhra Pradesh. Venkat Narayan's NTR remains a mystery till the end. "Academics and intellectuals around the country are tearing their hair to figure out Rama Rao's political philosophy. Chances are, they will find no ready-made answer. Rama Rao is beyond comprehension. He defies everything that is written in political textbooks. For one thing, he hasn't read those venerable tomes. He is not familiar with the jargon the political scientists flaunt in college classrooms and cocktail circuit.... The man

does not belong to the world of these intellectuals.... He defies any known definition.... The truth is that the man does not belong to Their India but to the Other India; the Other India where the people's concern is not what Rama Rao's political philosophy is but whether he will be able to provide them with two

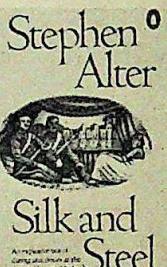
square meals a day, a roof over their heads and a modest place to live in."

Sometime in the next few years Venkat Narayan or somebody else must take up far more seriousness the task of writing a biography of NTR which will penetrate the mysteries around him and enable people to comprehend both the man and his policies in their light and shade.

— BHABANI SEN

## Gory Story

**SILK AND STEEL**  
by STEPHEN ALTER  
Penguin  
Price: £2.50 (Rs 40); Pages: 327



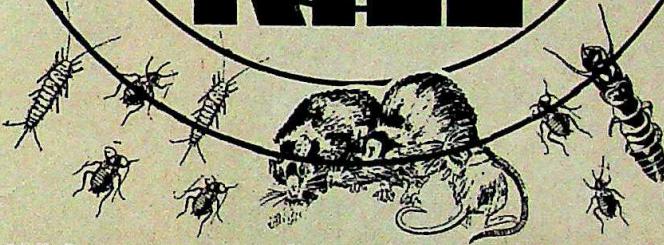
Silk and Steel

MUGHAL men. Two British dawn, a passes through a band led by a halfbreed on page in north rich and powerful Lucknow, from the flesh Lucknow: stra nagerie, this. centuries ago. On the face of it, Silk is action-packed fiction adrenaline weaves blood, death, war and pillage riveting tapestry. But, Alter's second book is much more honest — behind the ad battles, the love affairs, or, rather emphasised with them, lies the forbidding of despair and desolation presented by readying itself for the heel of a new, organised master.

James Webley, sometime captain of the army of the Gaekwad of Baroda, leads him to lead the life of a bandit, at the "the finest army in the north. A book for puts, Afghans and Rohillas all together like a patchwork quilt, as a pack of dogs". His second-in-command is Colonel Augustine, the son of Blanche, once called Charlotte Knowles, Trisuldas Thakur of Chittoor, becomes a fighting man himself, and the Baroda Gaekwad's service, along with Webley. Now, with the armies yapping at their heels, the have taken shelter in the Bijili Ghat. Webley's delusions of grandeur come to an end.

It is difficult to say just what has security of a settled court and the rigours of a life of banditry. "Baroda, the author, "was a place for sold

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■ What is the most difficult aspect of training for a space flight? Learning Russian, if the training in question happens to be the proposed joint Indo-Soviet space flight scheduled for early next year. India's first astronauts, Wing Cdr Ravish Malhotra, 40, and Sqn Ldr Rakesh Sharma, 35, back on vacation from their rigorous training session in Moscow, confessed candidly that language had been the biggest barrier so far. "Everything is in Russian and without knowing the language it's impossible," says Malhotra. The actual count-down, however, is not that distant. In early '84, one of the two men will become India's space pioneer when their Soviet spaceship blasts off from Russia for an eight-day odyssey. Asked whether they expected to be served vodka up in space, Sharma quipped: "Definitely not. We are going to be high enough without it."

■ It finally had to happen and the increasing interaction between two of the most high-profile industries—films and politics—has received the final seal of approval from the highest office in the land. But not without a certain embarrassment. Last fortnight, a film magazine carried an interview with an acting schoolteacher, Asha Chandra, in which she claimed that President Giani Zail Singh had met her personally to ask her to take "special care" of his grandson, an aspiring actor, who is enrolled in the school. In the interview, Chandra stated that her reply to that had been: "You do your governing there and I'll take care of things here."

In matters such as this, the Rashtrapati Bhavan staff are ever on their toes. Promptly came a haughty rebuttal in the form of a letter to the magazine by the President's press secretary which said that the President "may have met Chandra" on a visit to Bombay along with hundreds of other people and that her claims were totally unfounded. How that will affect the grandson's even-

tual career is still unknown, political patronage of the has acquired a new meaning.

■ Whether it is the King of Spain, the President of Lanka or the local Kapoor Amitabh Bachchan or any the other top Bombay stars, engagement that is a must in capital is an across the meeting with their favorite chef—Madan Lal Jaiswal, 33, is the live-wire at the Maurya Sheraton Bukhara restaurant, one of most popular eateries in capital, which celebrated its fifth anniversary last week largely because of Jaiswal's gourmet offerings of the west frontier variety that Bukhara has managed to retain its reputation. Four people who have passed through its glass portals can testify to that. Jaiswal, whose bubbly and jovial demeanour advertisement in itself, started cooking at the age of 12 as he says: "I have never looked back since." Among his regular clients are the loving Kapoor clan, particularly Raj Kapoor, and and Sonia Gandhi. With customers like that, it's little wonder that Jaiswal ensures perfection is maintained.

#### SIGN POSTS

■ Appointed: Bikram Singh, film journalist and former editor of *Filmfare*, as chairman of the Central Board of Censors, in an honorary capacity.

■ Appointed: Dr. S. Saxena, as secretary general of the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry (ASSOCHAM).

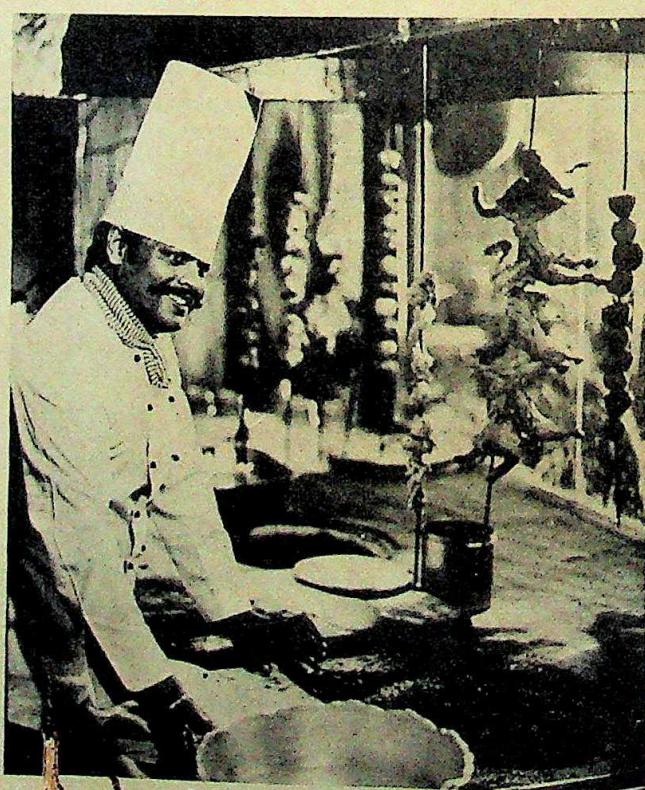
■ Died: Alfred Charlton, 71, in London. Charlton was the last editor of a newspaper in Calcutta in 1936 and apart from a break when he served in the Indian Army during World War II, he was with the news until 1967. He returned to Britain in 1967 and worked for the BBC's Indian language section.



Mrs Gandhi flanked by Malhotra (left) and Sharma: set for space



Zail Singh (left) and Chandra: controversial claims



Jaiswal: a gourmet's delight



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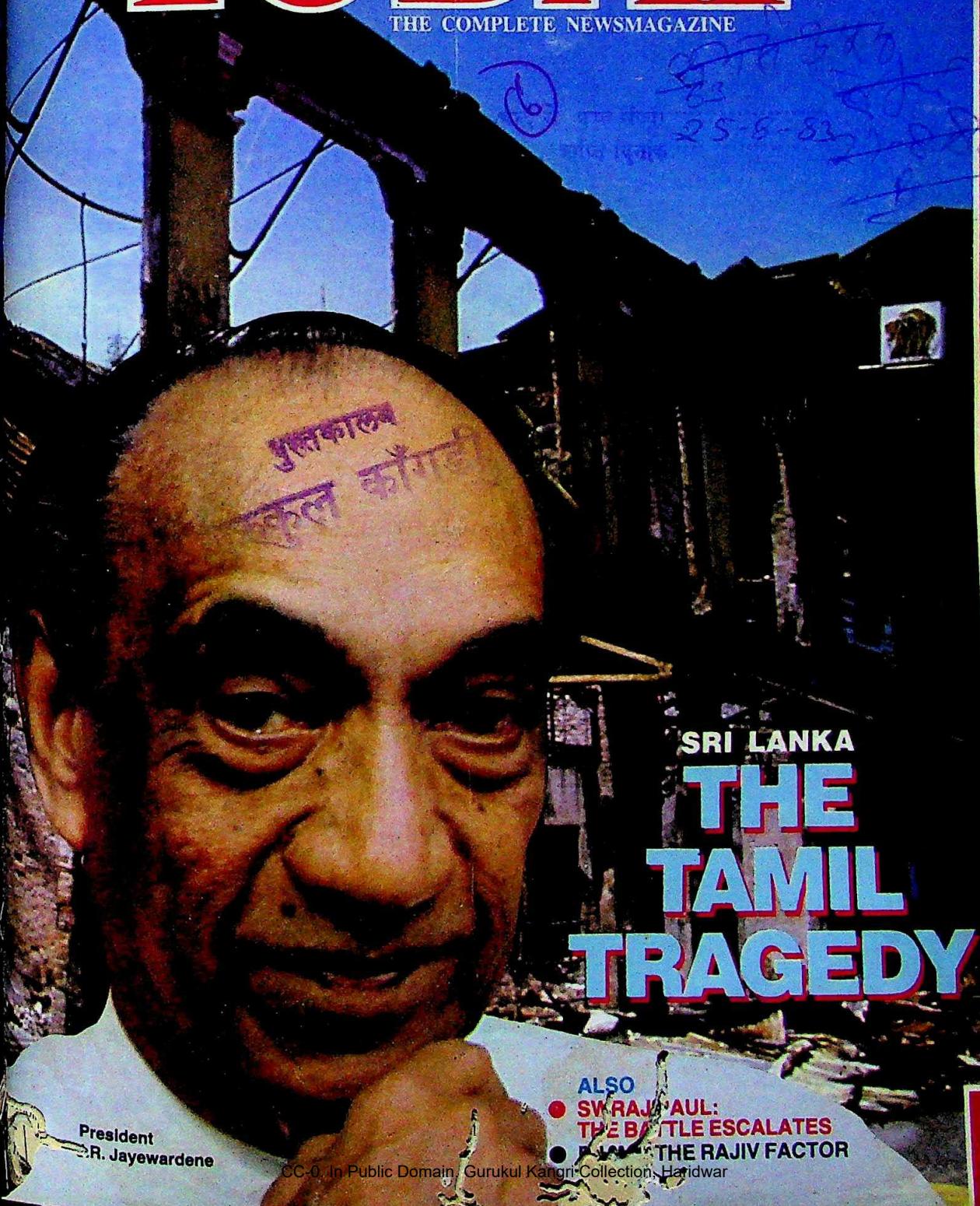
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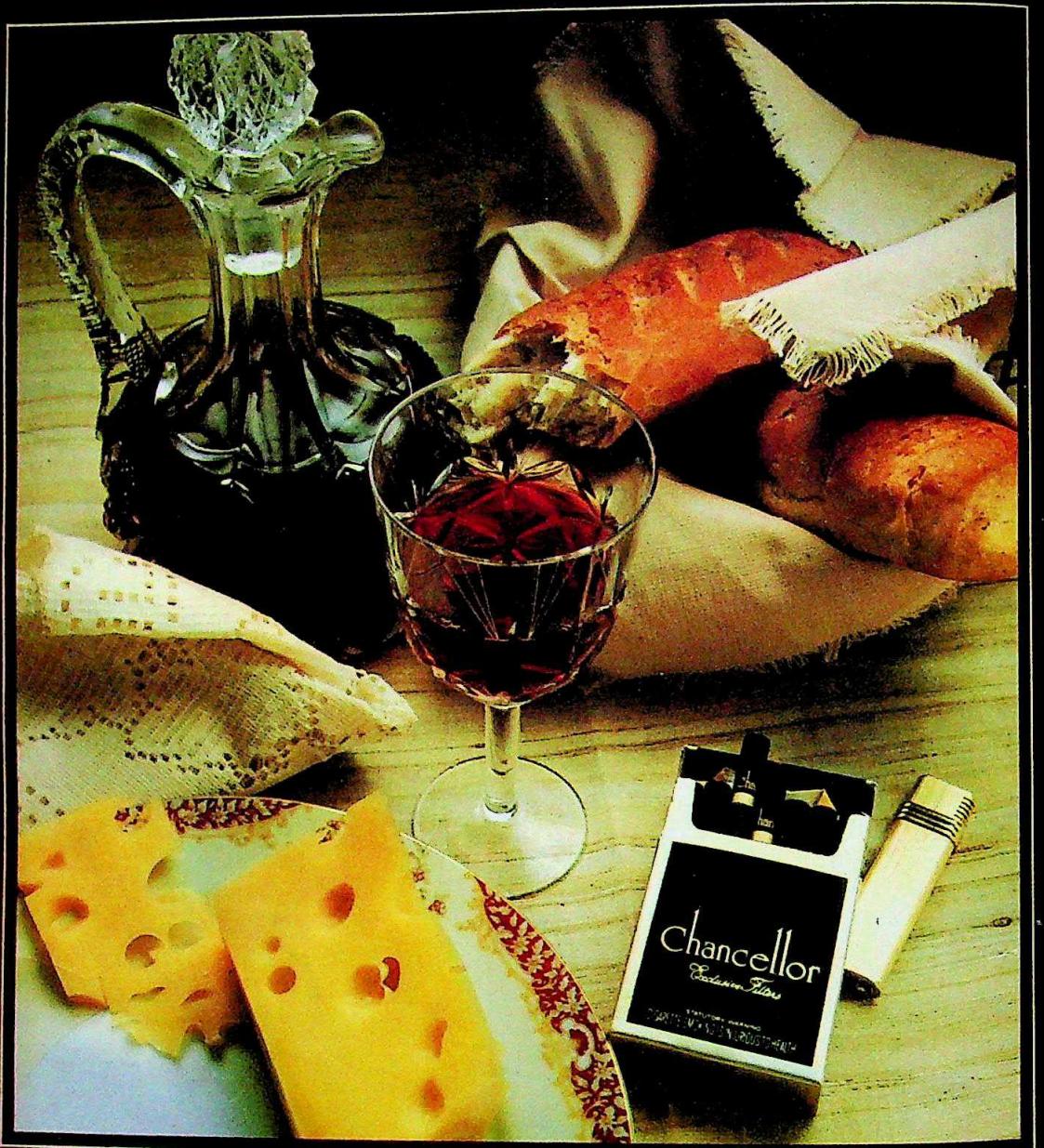
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 Swraj Paul: The Battle Escalates  
 Tata Investments: The Money Mirage  
 Stock Markets: Dull Days  
 India: Ruling The Waves  
 Bangalore: Bloom Town  
 Sports  
 Administration: Scuffle On The Sidelines  
 Arts  
 Jan College Of Art: Falling To Pieces  
 Land  
 Locators



## Sri Lanka

The simmering antagonism between Sri Lanka's Sinhalese and Tamils exploded last fortnight into an orgy of bloodletting. Sinhalese mobs, unchecked by the security forces, razed Tamil business establishments and houses, killing hundreds of members of the minority community. By last week, an uneasy calm prevailed, but the damage to Sri Lanka is incalculable.

Cover Story • Page 14



## Bihar

The end was inevitable but what surprised observers was that the dumping of Bihar's controversial Chief Minister Jagannath by the party high command took as long as it did. It was only perhaps his keen survival instincts that prevented him from being dropped earlier. But Rajiv Gandhi's key involvement in the move implies that the event has a significance that extends beyond Bihar.

Current Events • Page 24



## Broadcasting

Since June, the Centre has intensified its octopus-like grip over the official broadcast media, All India Radio and Doordarshan, projecting Mrs Gandhi and her son Rajiv with no holds barred. In addition it has launched a mindless Rs 68-crore expansion plan for TV transmission without generating enough programmes—all geared for the 1985 general elections.

Media • Page 114



## SARC

Despite the acrimonious exchanges between India and Sri Lanka over the Tamil slaughter, the first ever meeting of foreign ministers of South Asia, held in New Delhi last fortnight, was undoubtedly a success. The quest for South Asian Regional Cooperation (SARC) still remains a distant dream but the fact that the first step has been taken, indicates that the will is not wanting.

Neighbours • Page 71



## CHOGM

Planeloads of officials have descended on Goa, transforming it into a beehive of activity. The reason: the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) scheduled to be held in November. Though the meeting will take place in Delhi, Goa will be host to the delegates for a week-end of relaxation and "retreat". Hence the frenetic preparations.

Current Events • Page 47



## Swraj Paul

Swraj Paul, carried his battle into the enemy camp last fortnight with a whirlwind campaign in India. Presiding over scores of conferences and meetings, the Britain-based businessman gave every indication that his battle for corporate control of DCM and Escorts has just begun and the sparks that flew initially were just a foretaste of the fire that he intends to light under Indian business.

Business • Page 104



... believe it. To date INDIA TODAY completely come out' with a story so insub-  
oLOGY should be given and this issue  
for good would mean Silly Trivial Drivel.  
*K. Ravikumar*

ing the cover page I came to the  
that you are following the lead of  
Singh who loved publishing  
telephone calling pictures in the *Illustrated*  
the residence repairing line  
overnment  
any imper-  
this. But surprised to see that there is no  
everybody to of the work done by the Voluntary  
various activi- Association of India, Delhi (VHAI)  
eguard its EEF's assistance on this aspect. VHAI  
lished a booklet on VD titled *Better*  
Natabar D. in almost all the Indian languages  
supplied this booklet in large num-  
o the teleph- ill the government health centres.  
*K. Ravi*

heir calls for  
dialling by cover story no doubt touches the  
erloads the of the problem of STD, but your  
dent has not touched the preventive  
ould have been appreciated had he  
ested a few preventive measures by  
the medical experts. In a permis-  
very inter-  
ered about  
n Ministry  
amarital relationships cannot be  
uring every  
ones are al-  
e educate the masses through various  
ho is bother  
*S.K. Singh*

*Mohan Singh*

Government should take some con-  
s, including the opening of vene-  
courses in all medical colleges to end  
nner to bol-  
The red-light areas of all cosmopo-  
n made so  
should be equipped with adequate  
supplies. It is highly deplorable that  
agers are vulnerable to this disease.  
*Jayathirtha K. Pujar*

strongly object to Marie Mas-  
s view in reference to the legali-  
brothels. Should we embrace an  
because we cannot prevent it?  
care should be taken for proper  
ent of the Suppression of Immoral  
st and public opinion should be  
against prostitution, making peo-  
of its dangerous consequences.  
*Biranchi Narayan Panda*

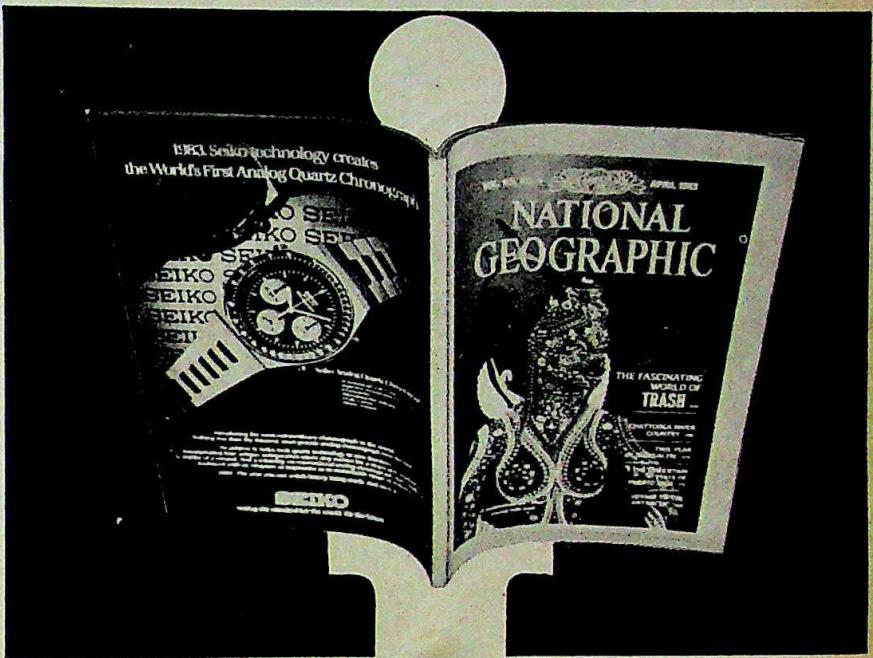
is not the an-  
STD. Such  
r-productive  
duced in sex  
ments warned  
be a taboo after all, since a large  
of married males and females are  
from this disease.  
*T.C. Thuoma*

Cover photograph was in bad taste.  
*Subhash K.*

AL AUGUST 31, 1983

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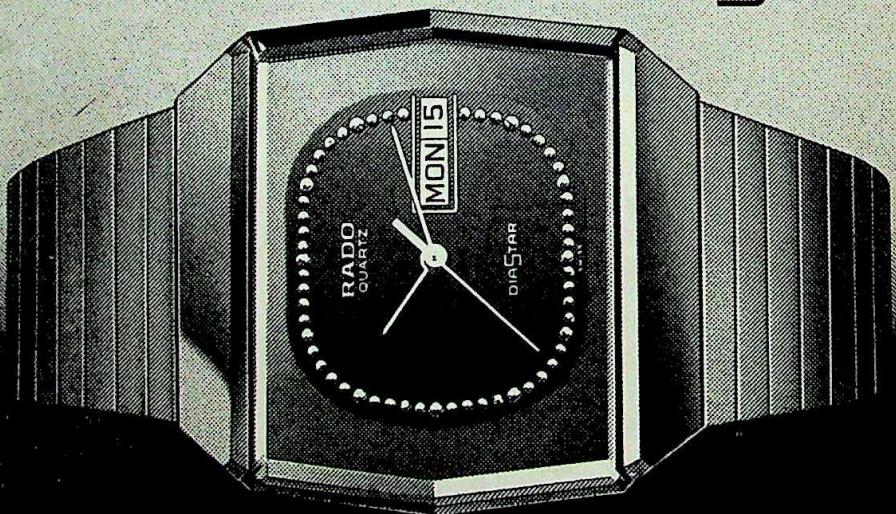
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inadequate was the write-up. Who is in knowing just statistics? What have really been highlighted is the symptoms of the various STD, the places to approach. That have been a more meaningful way to the subject.

**R.J. Bajaj**

Using your words from the letter to the editor of an earlier issue "A magazine's cover is its face... Although one's intention for putting a subject on the cover is topicality for the forthcoming issue..." Considering this, what happened at Jullundur and Baba Bakala were far more important than STD. Do you plan to hand over a bunch of magazines which sell only such cover photographs?

**Deepak Rastogi**

100 have finally stooped to the level of third-rate magazines which are in the market. Where was the need for revealing close-up? Since when have we resorted to such cheap gimmicks.

**Sukumar Murti**

#### PRESS

to Arun Shourie for yet another long and eye-opening account of the Jammu & Kashmir elections ("Eighty Or Thousand", July 31). We need more of this brand of journalism rather than CRPF battalions if we have to ensure the stability of our country.

**Seema Alavi**

Arun Shourie has meticulously and successfully substantiated his allegations against the national press. But in the same vein he has scrutinised the arbitrary manner in which the local Congress leaders manipulated the press to act as they were not able to achieve what they assured Mrs Gandhi—control of government with the help of G.M. No documentation this time! Is it the way to follow the code of responsible journalism that he himself preaches?

**Sidharth Prasad**

and the report on the Jammu & Kashmir elections even more benumbing than on the Nellie massacre. The free press is the only custodian of the rights of the people, and if it also loses its credibility we might as well give up all pretensions of being a democracy.

**Mahendra Singh Negi**

is unpeified at the remarkable conundrum, single-mindedness with which she criticises Mrs Gandhi and her

party. Even if all his findings are taken to be correct, due to the consistency in his tone, his reporting sounds more like a personal grudge than impartial journalism.

**Kanpur**

**Neeraj Bhatnagar**

■ The highlight of the issue was really a special report on the Jammu & Kashmir elections by Arun Shourie. It helped the issue maintain its standard.

**Nanded**

**J.R. Kokandkar**

■ Perhaps it is for the first time, and that too at a very crucial moment, that the press has suffered a severe blow to its credibility. Arun Shourie has once again come to the rescue of democracy, this time by exposing the falsehood indulged in by the national press. But he cannot be expected to come up with a rebuttal of every lie that the Government utters or that appears in the press.

**Calcutta**

**Narendra Nagar**

■ After going through the Jammu & Kashmir elections the difference between investigative journalism and mere reporting is clearly evident. Such blatant exposures of press politics are most welcome.

**Surat**

**Salim Golandaz**

■ Arun Shourie's article made its point, albeit with an excessive degree of overkill. Having demonstrated that the national press has no regard for factual veracity in its reportage, we would have expected him to come up with the facts of the Jammu & Kashmir killings, against which the inaccuracies of the national press could have been judged. Instead, he is content with tarring the press, and ends up recommending a 'code of conduct' for pressmen. Surely Arun Shourie, a leading civil rights activist and a forceful advocate of press freedom in the past, is not naive enough to believe that a 'code of conduct' for pressmen will not lead to a wholesale stifling of the press, and destroy the little press freedom we have, which he uses to express his opinion against the Government.

Mr Shourie owes the public an explanation on this score.

**Bombay**

**Crishn Zuweg**

#### DÉJÀ VU

The interview with Congress(I) MP Arun Nehru was rather amusing (July 31). He has complained of rigging, violation of electoral laws, misplacement of ballot-boxes, and misuse of state machinery and police forces in the recent Jammu & Kashmir elections. But all this and more took place in the Assam elections as well. Where were Mr Nehru and his colleagues at that time?

**Gauhati**

**Tapan Datta Chaudhari**

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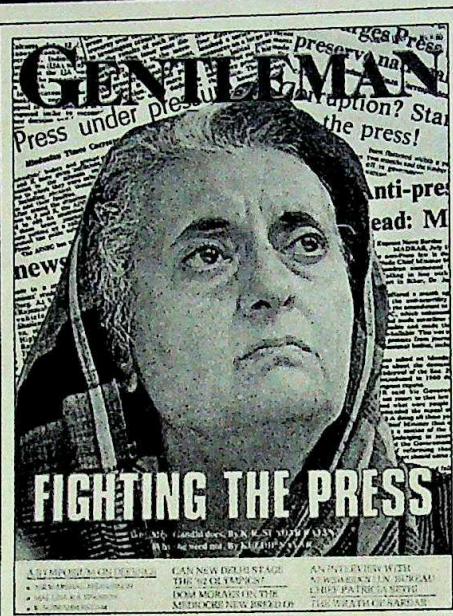
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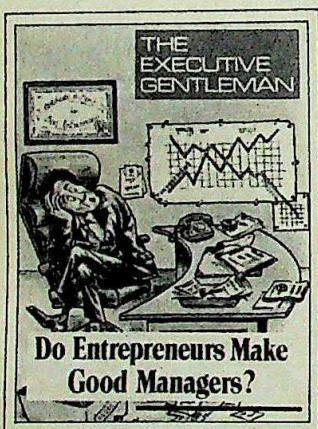
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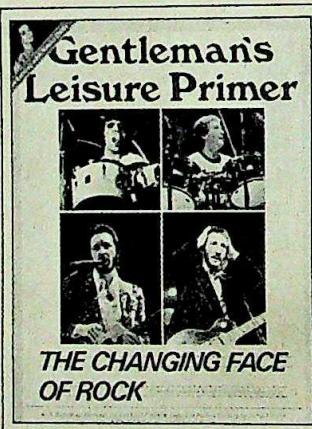
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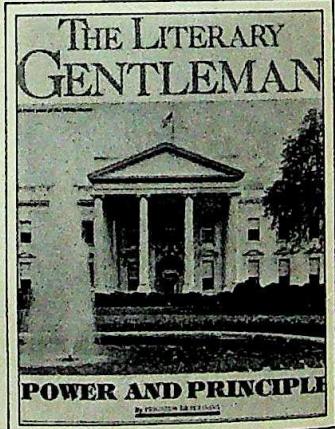
- **CAN DELHI BEAT PARIS FOR THE '92 OLYMPICS?:** Intense lobbying has started between India and France. SHIRISH NADKARNI reports from Los Angeles and Paris. Plus an interview with Indian Olympic Association President RAJA BHALINDRA SINGH.
- **KULDIP NAYAR** writes on supersession in the armed forces.
- **DOM MORAES** analyses the mediocre new breed of British politicians.



- **DO ENTREPRENEURS MAKE GOOD MANAGERS?** To begin with yes; after that they must professionalise or perish.
- **HARD TIMES FOR SOFTWARE:** India has the chance to grab a biggish slice of this multi-billion dollar industry.
- **THE MONEY PAGES:** The only column of its kind in India.



- **THE CHANGING FACE OF ROCK:** LEA HART, a British rock star, writes an exclusive article for GENTLEMAN on the international music scene.
- **GETTING AWAY:** A Rajasthan interlude by ANITA REDDI.
- **HOME ENTERTAINMENT:** A new 2-page column on audio, video and TV.



- **POWER AND PRINCIPLE:** Extracts from former National Security Adviser ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI's book on the Carter years.
- **IQBAL MASUD** reviews JOHN UPDIKE's novel *Bech is Back*.
- **GENTLEMAN ESSAY** by prize-winning playwright DINA MEHTA.

# GENTLEMAN

INDIA'S LEADING FEATURES MAGAZINE

Aug. 1983

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Over 90 editorial pages per issue — more than any other magazine in India.

# Doublethink, Doublespeak

THE INDIAN mind, and more specifically the Hindu mind, is unique. A highly evolved product of centuries of tradition, it has acquired an almost mystical ability to reconcile the irreconcilable, and to straddle seemingly insurmountable contradictions. Thus we pride ourselves on being a durable democracy and yet behave like a feudal monarchy. We trumpet loudly that we are the world's largest industrial power, that we launch satellites into space and make nuclear reactors, but we blithely allow this to exist with the most grinding poverty and rapacious exploitation. We have a socialist Constitution but some of the world's most successful capitalists thrive within our borders. Our capitalism is captive to a "socialist structure" but our socialism gasps for breath under a suffocating load of controls.

We are a little bit of this and a little bit of that. We have a private sector, which we want but restrain, and a public sector, which we feed even though it has insatiable appetite for money. We try to keep everyone happy. We open the economy because some people think it's a good idea, but not too much because others think it isn't a good idea. We compromise, choose the middle path, procrastinate, put off to tomorrow what we needn't do today. We view the passage of time as a cycle rather than as moments never to return. We refuse to pronounce sharply, we decline to make our mind, we ask for more time, set up another committee, re-examine decisions already made. We never say, this is the right course or decision, encourage it. Or, that is wrong, stop it. And in the end, everybody succeeds in fudging things to the point where there's scarcely any evidence of a mind at work at all.

A society in the midst of change is by nature schizophrenic. Indian schizophrenia has its own peculiar features. We are divided not so much between tradition and modernity as between passivity and action, between ennui and commitment, between the practical and the intellectual. We take decisions by the thousand but can't be bothered to see them being carried out. The national assets we have built in the last 35 years, the railways, roads, airports, dams, industries, canals, schools, universities, are impressive by any standard, but for the most part they are in an awful state of disrepair, in the poorest condition of maintenance. The result of all this building is an all-pervading sense of decay instead of regeneration. Our airlines fly the latest aircraft, but the trolleys at the airports don't work. Indians are among the world's best managers and technocrats, but our office buildings present a Kafkaesque picture of environmental gloom and graffiti. The railways in India are more than a century old and among the world's biggest, yet who bothers if the lights in railway compartments don't work, if the bulbs are burning and if the toilets are unfit for use. The end result is that our country fumbles along a seemingly uncharted path.

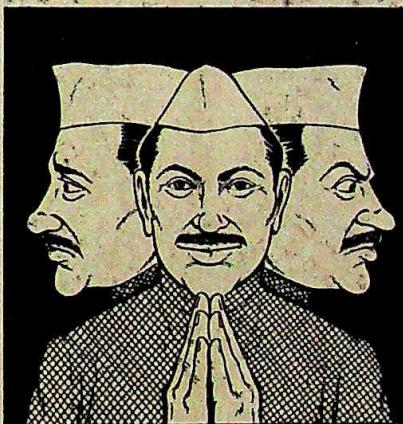
THE JAPANESE scholar, Hajime Nakamura, offering a comparative study of the "ways of thinking" of Indians, Chinese and Japanese—probably the single most illuminating effort at understanding the traditional Indian mind—portrays Indians as people given to abstract rather than concrete thinking, with a flair for the negative rather than the positive, indifferent to specifics and unable to grasp the quantitative concept of time. These characteristics set us apart not only from the West also from other Asians, like the Japanese and Chinese.

Nakamura argues that unlike the Chinese and the Japanese, the traditional Indian concept of man is vague; man is not seen as an individual, but only as an instance of the species of 'living beings', a particle of humanity. Alienation from the objective world bred among Indians an indifference to social organisations. The contemplative mind created a passive attitude towards the objective or natural world; Indians are inclined to accept things as they are rather than change them through individual and collective activism. The Laws of Manu virtually rejected everything new, viewing it as a source of evil and falsehood.

The noted orientalist A.L. Basham points out that political power has always had a great spell on the Indian mind, and social analyst Asish Nandy confirms that "power was ubiquitous in the modal lifestyle in traditional India". If we are poor implementors, it is because practical application of abstract ideas has never attracted us. In fact, as Nandy puts it, "activism and commitment in the public sphere tend to lack prestige (among Indians) and there are few inner pressures to actualise one's ideas and ideals."

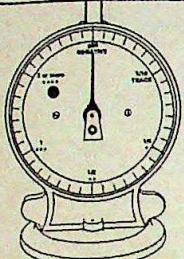
Much of the sloth, the passivity and the indifference to transformation of the environment come from the hot and humid Indian climate. Living in the Indo-Gangetic plains, says Nirad C. Chaudhuri quite correctly, drains energy, saps vitality, enfeebles will and idealism. Some scholars have traced the widespread submission to indignities and oppression largely to the climatic factor, along with the lethargy, lack of initiative and the slowness to work.

Does any of this matter? It does because the world is moving, and moving faster than we realise, in directions which demand change from us if we are not to be left behind. It is not a question of giving up traditional values or our Indianness, or of aping the West, or blindly embracing industrialisation, warts and all. It is looking actively, as the Japanese and Chinese have tried with greater success to do in very different ways, to incorporate the best of the past with the best of the present to make for a future that will work. It means using the well-known adaptability of the Indian mind to deal with the latter half of the twentieth century on its own terms instead of wallowing in ambivalence. India needs a vision. Or, as it is said in the Bible: "Where there is no vision, the people perish."



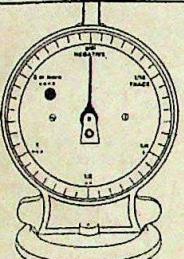
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### VOICES

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► So long as one behaves like a bonded slave of the organisation, the RSS leader doesn't bother about one's character. It is just like Indira Gandhi, for whom loyalty is the test. There it is individual dictatorship. Here it is institutional dictatorship.

—A.K. Subbiah in Current

► Six months ago Rama Rao would have been packed off to a lunatic asylum had he given evidence of such a plan (of invading Delhi). Today he is taken quite seriously.

—K.R. Sunder Rajan in The Sunday Observer

► We have political leaders who behave as if democracy were some foreign word, civil servants who operate as colonial administrators (and) corporate executives who dominate as bosses rather than lead as chairmen.

—Erasmo De Sequeira in Outlook

► Women should be identified with goddesses. It is our national tradition that even an elderly woman is called mother. Therefore, woman is the mother of the nation and should be respected as such.

—Giani Zail Singh at a public function in Hyderabad

► Why are you soft to Maniram Bagri (an MP) and rebuke others like a headmaster?

—H.C. Gangwar, a BJP MP to the speaker in the Lok Sabha

► No one can rebuke me. Those who take rebukes are cowards and have no right to be members.

—Maniram Bagri in the Lok Sabha

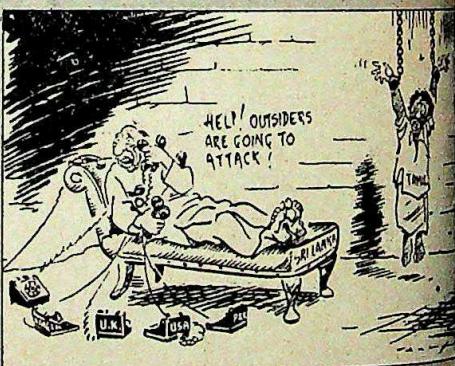
► If you use awards as a yardstick, then Satyajit Ray is the greatest. But that does not mean that masters always make masterpieces!

—Mrinal Sen in Stardust

► Whatever her failings, Mrs Gandhi is still India's most credible ruler by virtue of her skills and courage... people may still give her a majority... but she does not possess a recipe for sure victory.

—Girilal Jain in The Times of India

R.K. LAXMAN IN THE TIMES OF INDIA



► We are in a profession where, to be frank, we would always do our best to be recognised, even if it means abstaining from sex!

—Amitabh Bachchan in

► Serious film makers are martyrs—they suffer more than the audience.

—Film maker Kundan Shah in The Sunday Observer

► (I rate myself) average. Maybe a little above average, at the most. But then in the industry, average becomes brilliant!

—Hrishikesh Mukherjee in Weekend Review

► See, I've one crooked tooth right in front, just like Mr Rajesh Khanna. After years (of marriage) I must have something in common with him!

—Dimple Kapadia in Eve's Weekly

► My health, soft face and muscular body are my plus points... Besides, I never tells on me... I am much better than a 20-year-old!

—Dharmendra in Stardust

► The Third World is filled with primitive people telling virtuous lies.

—author V.S. Naipaul in

India Today, August 31, 1982/KC/123

Ames

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INDIA TODAY, AUGUST 31,

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# Autumn of '83

The crimson lakes  
now reflect  
distant autumn peaks  
in Kashmir.

The summer rush is now over. A fresh season has begun. The beauty still remains, in the burnt sienna of the autumn mountain peaks and the crimson lakes. The changing colours of gardens are beyond compare. With bright blue skies and cool, crisp, refreshing air. The sweet chirping of birds and rustle of pine and fir leaves in woodland retreats. Pahalgam, Gulmarg, Sonamarg, Yusmarg, Achabal, Kokernag, Daksum, Verinag and several other resorts beckon you for a more relaxing retreat. We have some suggestions for your autumn holiday in the 'Happy Valley'.

**SRINAGAR** The soft whisper of the river Jhelum is an echo of the easy paced lifestyle of Srinagar. Browse at the shops, displaying a dazzling array of exquisitely crafted work.

Dal Lake: Srinagar revolves around this expanse of blue waters, bustling with a variety of crafts and aquatic sports. Brightly hued houseboats are moored along its banks. Each a comfortable abode. Go on to the Nagin lake or to enchanting Mughal Gardens.

**HOW TO REACH** Direct daily flights from Delhi.  
onto Jammu, and from there taxis and

**HALGAM** 100 Km. from Srinagar. Fine  
wooded mountains, flower strewn pastures, dancing  
streams at the far end of the Lidder Valley.

**RU** 11 Km. from Pahalgam. The path winds  
wards through woods to the charming meadow.

**HOW TO REACH** Daily buses from Srinagar.

**MARNATH** 45Km. from Pahalgam. The Amar Cave, has a massive ice lingam, the symbol of Shiva, which waxes and wanes with the moon.

**GULMARG** 50 Km. from Srinagar. The meadow flowers. The heart of Gulmarg is its green golf course, the highest in the world.

alk the circular road girdling Gulmarg through  
the scented forests.

**KHILANMARG** Carpeted with wild flowers, a 40-minute pony ride from Gulmarg.

**HOW TO REACH** Good motorable road from Srinagar.

**SONAMARG** 80 Km. A valley guarded by mountains — Sonamarg, 'a meadow of gold'. And the crowning glory — river Sindh surging at the top, winding slowly and softly, through the flower spangled meadows.

**HOW TO REACH** Daily sightseeing coaches from Srinagar.

**VERINAG** 50 Km. from Srinagar. The famous spring, legendary source of Jhelum. Jehangir and Shahjahan built an octagonal tank and an arcade around it.

**HOW TO REACH** Buses from Srinagar.

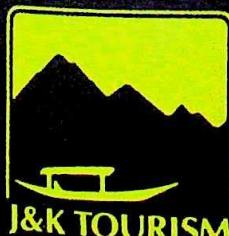
**KOKERNAG** 80 Km. The spring here, famous for its medicinal values, emerges from seven places at the foot of a thickly forested mountain, resembling a chicken claw. The crisp mountain air is invigorating.

#### **HOW TO REACH** Buses from Srinagar.

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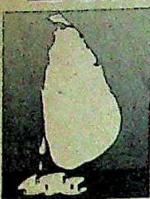
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SRI LANKA

# The Tamil Tragedy



THE 35-km ride from Katunayake International Airport into Colombo in a slow Mitsubishi coach driven by a nervous Sinhala is enveloped in silence. Almost every Indian visitor is heading for the Lanka Oberoi, or the Galle Face, or the Ceylon Intercontinental—hotels that have escaped the attention of mobs in search of hiding Tamils. Suddenly the colour of a visitor's skin is crucial—if it is dark, and he looks nervous, he is liable to be mistaken for a Tamil, and Tamils venturing out of doors in Colombo are asking to be lynched.

Sri Lanka's capital city for most of last fortnight looked like it had been taken by a conquering army. Street after street lay empty to the gaze, although the dawn-to-dusk curfew had been lifted, and small, watchful groups of Sinhalas dotted the sidewalks, providing flesh-and-blood counterpoints to the hundreds of burnt-out shops and factories and homes that lined the once bustling markets and roads. The arson was professional—charred shells fallen in on themselves, with blackened signboards announcing Tamil ownership hanging askew, here and there a liquor shop with hundreds of broken bottles littering the floor, or a

jewellery mart with the showcases battered in and the gold and gems carefully removed before the torching. Fifty yards from the Indian High Commission, right next door to the police headquarters, a stone's throw from the presidential palace, stood a huge block, blackened and devastated. "The shops in this block had heavy grill doors," recalled an eyewitness, "so an army truck was used as a battering ram to break through them, and then the soldiers sprang in with Sinhala battle cries to claim the lion's share of the loot."

**Violent Orgy:** That burnt out hulk was only one of the scores of landmarks of violence—shells of destroyed buildings, wrecks of cars and, above all, the scars in the minds of people—that remained from Sri Lanka's week-long orgy of violence that erupted with lightning speed at the end of last month and left in its wake not only a nation embittered and embattled, divided perhaps irretrievably along ethnic lines, but a relatively prosperous economy in ruin. Indo-Sri Lankan ties strained close to breaking point and a country at war with itself.

One-fourth of Colombo's population is Tamil, and by the first week of August, three-fifths of the Tamils, 90,000 in all, had

Troops patrolling Colombo streets



crowded in terrified disarray into 15 camps, euphemistically called 'care and fare centres', fleeing from the marauding halas. Almost every refugee had come with just the clothes on his or her back for days on end and the women sat surrounded by their squealing infants, eyes unable to comprehend the catastrophe that had sliced their lives in half.

The Sri Lankan press was censored so was the foreign press corps, and correspondents were granted curfews that restricted their movement between hotels and the office in the Fort area. Director of Information where Doctor Francis Douglas Liyanage, a brisk, bouncy bureaucrat and secretary to Information Minister Ananda Tissa de Alwis, presided over ethnic Jaffna daily press briefings. Liyanage's daily routine of increasingly rosy pictures of a "normalising" situation contrasted too sharply with the reality of Colombo, a city like a Tamils (5.5 per cent) cooker with the lid on; of streets packed with gutted buildings and sprinkled with 12.6 per cent of people queuing up during nonstop hours to buy a few eggs, or some rice, or cigarettes.

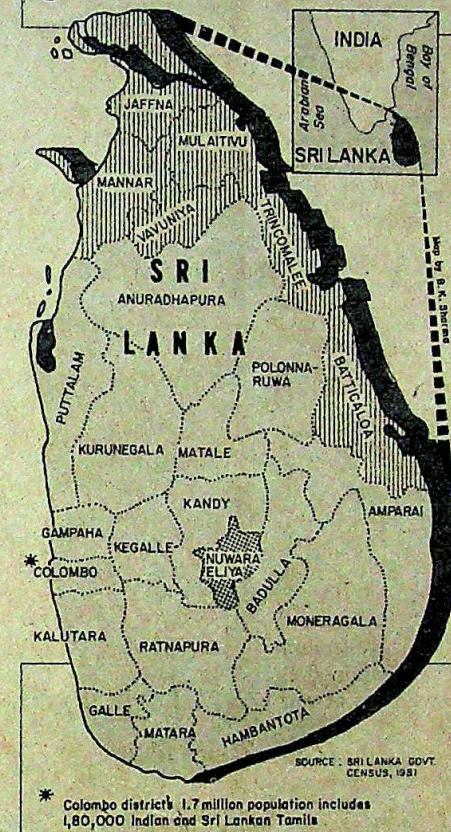
**Frightened City:** In the short space of a few vicious hours of bloodletting, Colombo had become a city thickening with anxiety, the Tamils expecting a knife in

Eliya, Batticaloa, Kalutara

## DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION

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Jaffna, Mannar, Vavuniya, Batticaloa, and Mullaitivu, along the island's northern and eastern coast.

Successive Sri Lankan governments have discriminated against the Indian Tamils. In 1948 they were disenfranchised, and two agreements signed between the Sri Lankan and Indian governments in 1964 and 1974 provided for the repatriation of 6 lakh Indian Tamils to India, with Sri Lanka granting citizenship to the remaining 3.75 lakh. Until February this year, only 4.05 lakh of the Indian Tamils had been granted Indian citizenship, and over a lakh of these still await repatriation. Sri Lanka has also been tardy with its side of the arrangement and owes 1.96 lakh citizenships.

The Jaffna Tamils, however, have historically been a distinct entity, and even under the Portuguese and the Dutch the Tamil kingdoms in the north were separate and independent. The British brought the two communities together for the first time in order to facilitate administration, but since independence in 1948, there have been outbreaks of Sinhala rage against the Tamils in 1956, 1958, and then four times so far in Jayewardene's regime. In recent years, the Tamil desire for a separate nation has crystallised into armed revolt from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, a guerrilla band consisting of not more than 200 armed youths. The Jaffna Tamils feel they are second-class citizens in Sri Lanka, and echo their late leader S.J.V. Chelvanayakam, who said in 1975: "Our basic mistake was not to ask for independence when the British left."

step, or the Sinhalas freely giving succumbing rage. The most dangerous misconception abroad that frenzied us that every Indian is a Tamil, and every Tamil is a terrorist.

In Colombo had benefited vastly President Junius R. Jayewardene's economy. They opened thousands of outlets, or small groceries called refugee houses, or jewellery shops, import-firms, and there were even a few men sat surrounded by tycoons controlling coconut plantations, eyes, textiles, or construction material. The catastrophe that prosperity is now in jeopardy, forever. The tragedy was that most Tamils in Colombo did not want a corps, and taxation. Eelam, which is the cry of planted curfews in the northern districts centred in indeed, the majority of the victims of the Fort area violence were the so called Indian where those who migrated to Sri Lanka in age, a brisk century to work on the estates, and to Informally traditionally been uncomfortable Alwis, predominantly Jaffna Tamils who have been manage's daily centuries.

**Pictures of Examination:** According to the 1981 latest too shambolic census, there were 8.25 lakh in a city like Colombo Tamils (5.5 per cent of the population of streets packed 1.8 million Ceylonese (Jaffna) crowded with 12.6 per cent of the population). The during no Tamils live mostly in the districts of or some new Kalutara, Kandy, Matale, Eliya, Badulla, Ratnapura and the short traditional tea-garden and Sinhala bloodletting the Jaffna Tamils are concentrated in

A ravaged Colombo hotel



VIOLENCE

## Web Of Hate

**T**HE KILLINGS and looting and arson in Colombo began on July 24, in the late evening, after the bodies of the 13 soldiers killed in an ambush the previous day at Thinnaveli in Jaffna in the far north had been brought to the capital. When President J.R. Jayewardene went to the capital's Kanatte General Cemetery to see the bodies he was turned back by a hostile group of soldiers who stoned his car. Then the madness exploded, tearing through the heavily Tamil-populated suburb of Borella, in the city's east, and the mobs poured down Thimbirigasyaya Road, setting upon every unwary Tamil, looting and pillaging.

On Monday July 25, and then Tuesday, the fires spread to the Tamil areas of Wellawatta, Dehiwala, Bambalapitiya, and Kollupitiya. Not a single Tamil house in Wellawatta was left standing, and mirrored in the eyes of the thousands of refugees is the memory of the wolf-packs that went marauding through the streets, while the police and the army stood by, cheering them on, even on occasion joining in.

**Genesis:** The madness was long in the making. Ever since the referendum in December 1982, which perpetuated the steamroller majority enjoyed by Jayewardene's United National Party (UNP) in Parliament, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam stepped up their sporadic attacks on the security forces, killing at least 40 until early July.

The Government retaliated in equal measure, clamping military rule and a state of emergency on Jaffna, Vavuniya and Mannar districts, using the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) with impunity. On June 3 this year came the most draconian measure—Emergency Regulation 15a, which allows the security forces to bury or cremate the bodies of people shot by them without revealing their identities or carrying out inquests.

It was a measure that provoked New Delhi to sit up and take notice. On July 20, Sri Lanka's High Commissioner in New Delhi, B.P. Tillekeratne, was summoned to the External Affairs Ministry and told that the Government of India viewed the latest Emergency Regulation, and attacks on Indians, with concern. Tillekeratne sent back an angry cable to Colombo, and the Government, and its servile press, launched a ~~heat~~ campaign, calling the Indian move an interference in Sri Lanka's internal affairs.

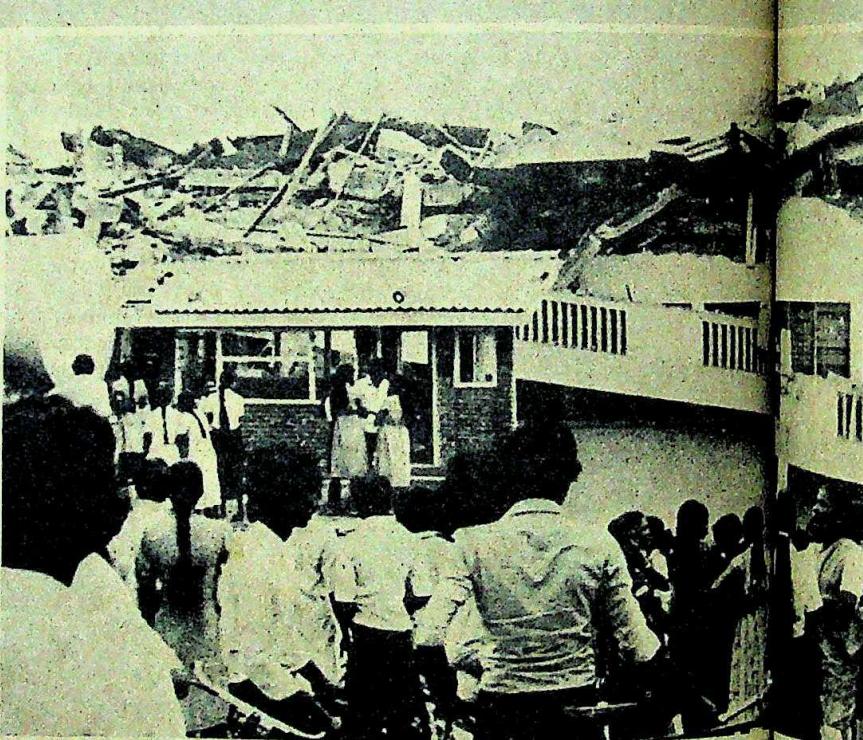
**Growing Tension:** The same day the

army banned all bicycle traffic in Jaffna—for the Tigers are known to pedal up to an unsuspecting soldier, blow his head off, and make off with his weapon—allowing cyclists to travel only with special permits. Two days later Parliament passed an urgent bill to force Tamil refugees in Vavuniya and Trincomalee, plantation labour that had fled previous violence in the Kandyan tea estates, to return to work.

In late June the Tigers had carried out one of their most daring raids at Kankesanturai, the harbour at the tip of the Jaffna peninsula, overcoming an army platoon guarding a government cement factory and making off with army

horrendous killings took place on July 26 and 27 in Colombo's Welikada Prison when Sinhala prisoners broke into the cells of 'terrorist' Tamil inmates and mercilessly slaughtered 53 of them. Twenty-eight Tamil prisoners were shifted from Welikada's Wing C3 to the 'youthful offenders' section after 35 of their fellow prisoners were killed on July 25, but two days later the Sinhala prisoners broke into that section and overpowering prison guards who did not seem too anxious to stave them off—a market-hall house was 'closed'.

Among those killed was Dr S. Sunderam Rajasunderam, secretary of the Gandhiyam Movement that had been



Crowds in front of a wrecked building in Colombo: an uncontrollable mob.

uniforms, a battered typewriter, and a cache of dynamite.

In mid-July, news came through that the army had gone on the rampage in Jaffna, even raping some Tamil women, two of whom later committed suicide, all of whom were inmates in a Jaffna hostel.

The ambush was the flash-point that set Sri Lanka aflame. Thirteen Sri Lankan soldiers were killed when their convoy was attacked with the stolen dynamite and gunfire near Thinnaveli, in Jaffna district, on July 23, and when their bodies were brought to Colombo the following day, Sinhala anger exploded in a 72-hour orgy of killing and pillage.

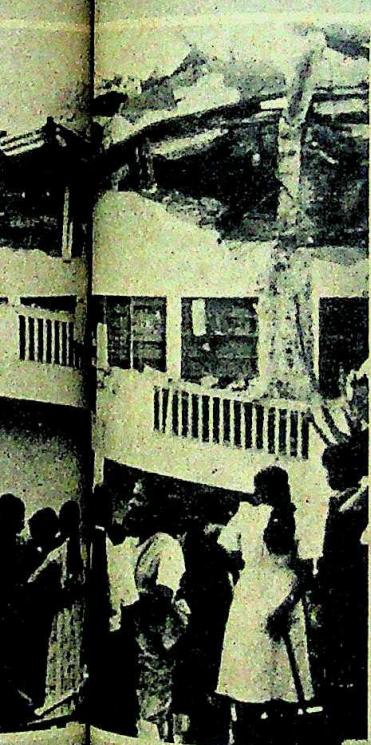
**Systematic Killings:** The most

rehabilitating Indian Tamil refugees in the plantations in Vavuniya and Trincomalee. Rajasunderam had already spent over three months in army custody undergoing torture in various camps.

Officially, the Sri Lankan government has admitted that 267 Tamils were killed in mob violence until August 2, that there were over 1,500 cases of arson, nearly 100 cases of looting, 300 cases of 'mischief', that at least 100 looters had been arrested, and a few shot dead. But censorship saw to it that figures of those killed by the security forces were withheld; in Jaffna alone, the army reportedly killed more than 1,000 Tamils in retaliation. The Tamils held

lace on July 25, over 1,000 were killed. "I was with my lungi, and with no dikkada Pratikrami to a camp on July 25," says a Tamil businessman in Colombo. "I broke into the Tamil business in Coimbatore and was 'close' to the UNP and 53 of them were inmates. Information about violence in prison C3 to us. 'The first night I wrapped them in after 35 in a newspaper and used them killed on July 25. For two days the camp segment all their time hunting for a section of drinking water."

**Terror:** In Kandy, Nuwara Eliya who did not know what had happened to them off their market area, and Matale, a Tamil house and shop was looted and burnt. All high-secretary was stopped by Sinhala secretary to check for Tamils. Every-



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was distrustful of everybody  
the Tamils in the refugee  
desperately asked for help in distributing food.

**Inadequate Sops:** When elected by a landslide margin in 1977, Jayewardene held out a few sops to the Tamils. These included a provision in the new Constitution, which came into effect in September 1978, whereby Tamil joined Sinhala as a national language, although Sinhala continued to be the sole official language; the setting up of District Development Councils (DDC) which the president promised would lead to devolution of power; and a new admissions policy for universities, which has led to a rise in Tamil admissions, in contrast with the discriminatory policy followed by Mrs Bandaranaike's government.

But such measures did not evoke satisfaction among the Tamils. The DDCs were given few powers, and most district ministers, even in the Tamil stronghold of Jaffna, were Sinhala. The use of Sinhala as the official language posed tremendous problems for the Tamils, whose schools rarely taught the Sinhala language. And since university admissions were based in large part on the basis of districts—only six of the country's 24 districts having a Tamil majority—Sinhala students once again enjoyed an advantage over their Tamil counterparts.

The Jayewardene Government's Tamil slate is far from clean in other respects. An Amnesty International report released on July 6 details the reign of repression and terror let loose by the security forces in the north and east of the island. Amnesty International points out that the Sri Lankan Prevention of Terrorism Act (1979) is far more draconian than similar acts in South Africa and Britain, allowing for 18 months' detention without trial, arbitrary arrest, and practically unchecked powers of torture and interrogation of suspects.

**Seeking Sanctuary:** After last fortnight's violence, the wealthier Tamils either fled into the sanctuary of luxury hotels or took the first flight out of the country. During the first week of the violence at least 20 Indian High Commission staff with their families had to be placed in expensive hotels—because they had all been staying in the lower-middle-class suburb of Wellawatta, where the rents are low, but where the houses, densely bunched together, made easy targets for the mobs.

The eradication of the Tamils led to another piquant situation—there were no outlets for essential food supplies during non-curfew hours, and while looted video-recorders were selling for 500 Sri Lankan rupees on the pavements the Government desperately asked for help in distributing food.

Most of the makeshift refugee camps were in school buildings or Hindu temple courtyards. Inside the camps, the cowering

families talk in whispers. "The CID is all around us, in plain-clothes," says Dr Ganapathy Raja, at the Vinayakar Kovil camp in Bambalapitiya, "and we have to smuggle ourselves in and out of the camp. We can't even reach outside for help." The sanitation is atrocious in the camps, and by week's end dozens of refugees have come down with acute dysentery—some say even cholera—and an entire wing of the Colombo General Hospital has been cordoned off to house sick refugees.

**T**HE VIOLENCE spread, the inferno engulfed other towns—Gampaha, Kalutara, Kandy, Matale, Nuwara Eliya and Trincomalee—the Government chose to explain it as a "spontaneous Sinhala reaction to atrocities committed by Tamil terrorists". But there was a cold-blooded method to the madness. The mobs were armed with voters' lists, and detailed addresses of every Tamil-owned shop, house, or factory, and their attacks were very precise. There was little honour among the marauders—on the second day the Tamils were set upon by Colombo's Moors, or Muslims, but on the third day the Sinhala mobs turned upon the Muslims too, at Nugegoda in Colombo's south.

At fortnight's end, most government offices in Colombo had lost their substantial Tamil staff. Senior Tamil officials, like the food commissioner of Sri Lanka, the director of Sri Lanka Telecommunication, and officials of the Indo-Sri Lanka Microwave Network had been missing from their homes for weeks.

Also badly hit were three of the island's biggest industrialists—K. Gunaratnam, whose empire included textiles, film distribution, and transportation; A.Y.S. Gnanam, who started life as a street peddler and rose to control a major manufacturing firm St Anthony's Hardwares, and the Syntex and Asian Cotton Mills, and was formerly a member of the Board of Governors of the Free Trade Zone; and Rajamahendran Maharaja, whose group was one of the largest in Sri Lanka, manufacturing cosmetics, trading and distributing imported products, and contracting large chunks of the Mahaweli project programmes. Along with the Hirdaramanis and the Jafferjees, Sindhi and Bohra businessmen who have established strong footholds over the last 50 years, the total loss suffered by these industries was estimated at 2,000 million Sri Lankan rupees (Rs 800 crore)—and their destruction led to the loss of 1.5 lakh jobs.

Most astonishing of all was the manner in which President Jayewardene reacted to the violence. For a leader who does not want his country to break into two, the president was singularly chary of identifying—and

TAMIL NADU

## Backlash

**I**NEVITABLY, the fall-out from the anti-Tamil carnage in Sri Lanka settled on Tamil Nadu where reactions ranged from the frenzied to the farcical. Life in the state was almost totally paralysed as a bewildering succession of strikes, road and 'rail roko' agitations, sporadic incidents of violence and a plethora of processions erupted in the wake of the Sri Lankan crisis.

The week-long agitation was capped last week by the resignations from the state Assembly of DMK President M. Karunanidhi and K. Anbazhagan, deputy leader of the DMK in the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly, in protest against the Centre's ineffectiveness in dealing with the Tamil situation in Sri Lanka. Though in general the state-wide protests and burning of Jayewardene's effigies were spontaneous actions, it was patently clear that the grief-stricken state's political bosses were bent on milking the issue for political gain. Karunanidhi lost no time in demanding a half-day bandh the day after the Sri Lankan riots erupted and issued an appeal to the prime minister to "send troops to Sri Lanka to save the lives of Tamils".

Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran avoided his usual dramatics and after a four-hour Cabinet meeting declared a week-long mourning period in the state and also issued a call for a state-wide bandh. Not only was the bandh supported by all the political parties but by the Centre as well, a clear corollary to the new-found romance between the Congress(I) and the AIADMK. All central offices and undertakings were shut down and train services to and from the state suspended for the day.

**Horror Stories:** The emotional and angry reactions were undoubtedly fuelled by the tales of horror related by Indian and Sri Lankan Tamils who fled the island state in the wake of the violence. M.L. Vasanthakumari, Carnatic musician who was in Colombo on a concert tour at the invitation of the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC), returned to Madras visibly shattered by the experience. "My escape from Colombo was providential," she said. "We were staying with an industrialist friend and on July 25, we received a call from the SLBC telling us to leave immediately. We had barely left the house when it was set on fire by a Sinhalese mob. After that we huddled ter-

rified in a hotel room for four days before we were able to board a Madras flight. It was a horrible experience."

A 28-year-old systems analyst, a Sri Lankan Tamil who wishes to remain unidentified, had an even ghastlier experience to relate: "That morning, we were having a meeting in the office when we heard the sounds of mob fury. We went out onto the balcony and what we witnessed was systematic looting and arson by a merciless mob. The leader had a voters' list with him to identify Tamil houses. They would mark a Tamil house, forcibly enter, smash the furniture and window panes, drag the inmates out and kill them. Another passing mob would stop cars, extort petrol and set fire to what was left of the houses. I rushed home and told my

frenzy. Kamaraj Congress President P. Nedumaran has already set off with a huge following on a padayatra from Madurai to Rameshwaram with the intention of crossing over to Talaimannar by country boats. The Dravida Kazhagam has announced a protest march against what it calls the Centre's indifference to the Tamilian ordeals in Sri Lanka while the DMK has announced a programme to burn copies of the Sri Lanka bill banning political parties which advocate separatism.

The *piece de resistance*, however, is the resignation of the chief whip of the Government in the state Legislative Council, E.R. Janarthanam "to work for the cause of Tamils in Sri Lanka". Janarthanam has been put in charge of the group with Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF)

office which opened in Madras last week. Political observers interpret these moves as an attempt by the Opposition to force MGR's hands and pressurise him, on moral grounds, to resign from the chief ministership.

**Close Relations:** The Tamils in Tamil Nadu have a close affinity with their counterparts in Sri Lanka. Like the Gujaratis who went to East Africa and the Punjabis who went to Britain and Canada during the days of the British Empire, most of the Tamils in Sri Lanka have close relations in India. Tamil films, music, periodicals and Kanjeevaram saris keep the close relationship going between the Tamils living in two sovereign countries, separated by the narrow Palk Strait. Very often, marriages take place across the sea and a Sri Lankan Tamil always comes to Tamil Nadu for shopping whenever there is a wedding in the house.

In other words, it is as if members of the same family are living not far from each other, separated by the narrow strait. Which is why the Tamils in Tamil Nadu get enraged when their brethren are subjected to periodic repression in the island. This is also why racial violence in Sri Lanka becomes a major political issue in Tamil Nadu where the AIADMK and DMK vie with one another in resorting to populist gimmicks.

MGR will have to take a definite stand if the anti-Tamil violence in Sri Lanka erupts once again—a prospect that is frighteningly real. As the wife of a national daily correspondent based in Colombo predicted grimly after she managed to escape to Madras with her two children, "The ghost of food riots are looming larger every day. The worst is yet to come."

S.H. VENKATRAMAN



Tamil family at Trivandrum airport

parents we must leave. Hardly had I said that when we heard the next house being ransacked. We grabbed our passports and a change of clothes and rushed out. A Sinhalese swung at me with a spear. Luckily, a Sinhalese shopkeeper nearby stopped him by telling him we spoke Sinhalese and had done a lot of social work locally. It was like being born again when we got out of the country."

**Political Moves:** All this has only spurred opposition political leaders to whip up popular communal and cultural

the very forces that were Tamils into a corner and the disintegration. Almost as a Nero fiddling while his Jayewardene went on the air days after the carnage exploded unique in its rationalisation of

not a word of sympathy for the Tamils, who had never before won with such ferocity in the Sinhala, the president said that "the time to accede to the clamour and respect of the Sinhala people" and the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), the Tamils' only legitimate group with 16 MP's in a house of 225. Janardan Jayewardene in Parliament and the largest contingent of the ruling UNP has 139 seats. Madras last year only after the violence had been interpreted by the correspondents that the news of hands and bodies in Jaffna two weeks before grounds, to and killing of 13 soldiers on July 26 "deliberately" withheld from

Tamils in discipline is a problem in the army," Jayewardene blandly.

Lanka. Like stroke, instead of firmly taking East Africa and Jayewardene had chosen the to Britain appeasing Sinhala sentiment. "I days of the and my government cannot see," the Tamils in any other way by which we can apportional desire and request of the periodicals."

**Measures:** After appeasement in the Tamil search for a "hidden hand". On countries. The Government banned three left-wing groups: the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) had, under Rohan Wijewardene, led an insurrection for shopkeeper minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike in 1971—the Nava Sama Party (NSSP), and the Communist Party (Moscow). Twenty of their leaders fled over the following days, but led by the NSSP leader Vasudeva Araya went into hiding.

Angrily, government ministers raised the spectre of a communist plot to destroy Jayewardene's political power and to divide the country. The JVP, a virulent Sinhalese, demanded the closure of the East German embassies. By fortuitously, however, allegations that the was fomenting trouble, and the wife of a member of Soviet diplomats were expelled, had died down.

After the imprisonment by Jayewardene in 1977, and JVP cadres, the 'new' left, had even been the UNP Government. All three in any case had been roundly defeated in the electorate in the 1977 election.

tions, and the Communist Party's sole MP, Sarath Muttettuwegama, was unseated by the Supreme Court on July 22 after an election petition filed against him was upheld.

**Hardline Threat:** None of these manoeuvres, which later events have proved to be red herrings, deflected from the unpalatable fact that the president was facing a strong threat from hardliners within his government, and that the violence had been encouraged by these elements as a means of scaring the Tamils. What Jayewardene did not bargain for was a combination of jumpy and rebellious troops and a shadowy group of Sinhala Buddhist fanatics, led by militant bhikkhus (monks) of the Eksath Bhikkhu

Mathew: key role



Minister Cyril Mathew, a militant Buddhist zealot, UNP Chairman N.G.P. Panditharathne, minister Ranil Wickremasinghe, who controls a large youth cadre, and UNP Secretary Harsha Abeywardena:

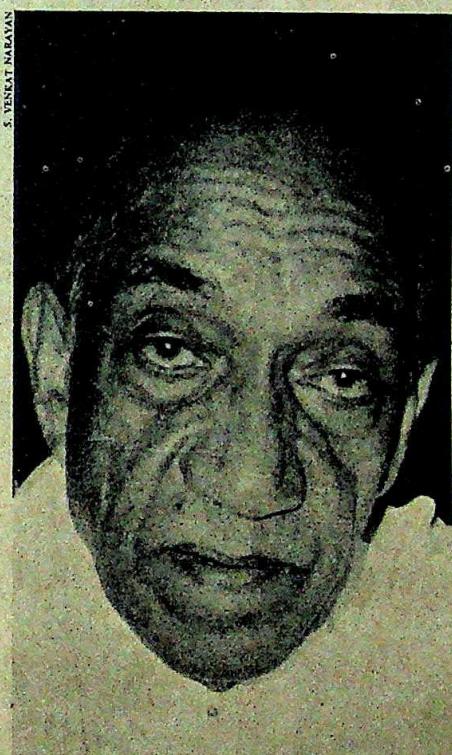
► The prime minister's cabal, led by Prime Minister Ranasinghe Premadasa. Although

Premadasa belongs to the lowly Hinna caste, his acumen and manoeuvrability have made him a frontrunner in the succession sweepstakes;

► The Gamini Dissanayake faction, led by the young minister for lands, land development and the Mahaweli Project. Dissanayake has emerged as Jayewardene's protege after the death of heir-apparent and tycoon Upali Wijewardene in an air crash earlier this year;

► The Ananda Tissa de Alwis faction, led by the unprepossessing information minister. De Alwis may be a stopgap arrangement if a leadership vacuum arises after Jayewardene.

Sources say that Industries Minister Mathew, who also controls the powerful labour union Jathika Sevaka Sanghamaya, was directly responsible for pinpointing Tamil-owned shops and factories to be destroyed. In Parliament on August 4, during the debate on the Sixth Amendment to the Sri Lanka Constitution, which has effectively banned the TULF on the grounds that it advocates separatism, Mathew defended the violence by saying: "The Sinhala were frustrated for years, they were discriminated (against). If the Sinhala is the majority race, why can't they be the majority?" Mathew is also the leader of the island's backward Vahumpura community, which comprises over a third of the population and has been at a disadvantage traditionally vis-a-vis the Tamils in jobs and business.



Jayewardene: unsatisfactory measures

Peramuna, which first came into prominence in 1956.

Currently, Jayewardene, who is 76, is facing sustained opposition from different power groups in the Government, all jockeying for the first position in the race to take the president's place. The groups:

► The security group, with close links with the armed forces and staunchly anti-Tamil, led by Cabinet Secretary G.V.P. Samarasinghe, Presidential Secretary W.M.P. Medikwella, and Defence Secretaries Colonel C.A. Dharmapala and General S. Attygalle;

► The party caucus, led by Industry

**M**OST disturbing of all, however, was the carefully floated rumour that India's armed forces were about to invade Sri Lanka, possibly to bring off a Cyprus-like division of the island. In what was obviously an orchestrated chorus in the censored press, the Sinhalas were swamped by news of the angry and emotional reaction to the carnage in Tamil Nadu, where the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and the ruling All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) vied with each other— even resorting to an all-state bandh on August 2—to protest against the genocide let loose against the Sri Lankan Tamils.

Most Sinhala Sri Lankans, and even many Tamils, believe that India is a safe haven for Tiger guerrillas on the run from

## REGIONAL SECURITY

# The Indian Doctrine

**T**HE CARNAGE in Sri Lanka has spawned an Indian doctrine of regional security. The doctrine has received prompt implicit or explicit approval of the regional as well as international communities. It can be explained in the following terms: India has no intention of intervening in internal conflicts of a South Asian country and it strongly opposes intervention by any country in the internal affairs of any other. India will not tolerate external intervention in a conflict situation in any South Asian country if the intervention has any implicit or explicit anti-Indian implication. No South Asian government must therefore ask for external military assistance with an anti-Indian bias from any country.

If a South Asian country genuinely needs external help to deal with a serious internal conflict situation or with an intolerable threat to a government legitimately established, it should ask help from a number of neighbouring countries including India. The exclusion of India from such a contingency will be considered to be an anti-Indian move on the part of the Government concerned.

**Power Confirmed:** This regional security doctrine reflects, on the one hand, the reality of India's preponderant power position in the South Asian region and, on the other, the South Asian consensus that there should be no interference by any country in the internal affairs of any other. It goes two significant steps further. First, it asserts India's right to be included in any regional assistance sought by a South Asian country to deal with a serious internal conflict situation. Secondly, it stresses that assistance in such contingencies should be regional rather than by individual countries.

An important aspect of the Indian regional security doctrine is that it emerged from a series of conversations between Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and leaders of the Opposition. It is therefore cushioned on a national consensus.

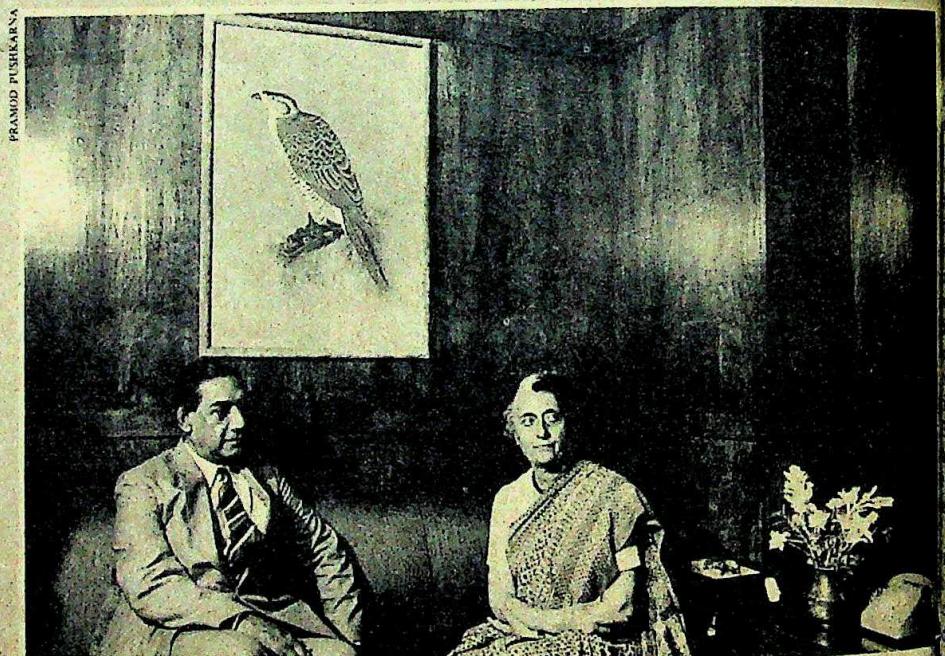
In the early days of the massacre of Tamils in Sri Lanka, President Jaye-

wardene faced a rebellion in certain sections in Sri Lanka's minuscule army. He also feared a coup by right-wing elements in the army. Faced with the two threats, Jayewardene tried to placate the extremist elements among the Sinhalas as well as in the Sri Lanka army by allowing some journalists to write about possible Indian military intervention.

At the same time, he made secret diplomatic soundings of four governments, those of the United States, Britain, Pakistan and Bangladesh, for military assistance in the event of a serious break-

India. He said: "We are looking into all aspects of these reports and are also in touch with several governments including those specified in the press reports to emphasise the nature of Indian concern at the existing situation in Sri Lanka and at the possible future course of developments including any foreign involvement of this kind in the region."

A flurry of diplomatic activity ensued in the Indian foreign office. The four governments and others were immediately told that while India was inevitably deeply concerned with developments in Sri Lanka, it had absolutely no intention of intervening. At the same time, India would not tolerate intervention by any other country within



H.W. Jayewardene and Mrs Gandhi in New Delhi: concerned but detached

down of the law and order situation in Sri Lanka. The two moves got meshed together in newspapers to create an impression that Jayewardene was seeking military assistance from the four countries to cope with a possible military intervention by India.

**Diplomatic Moves:** Facing an excited and angry Parliament in New Delhi on August 1, Minister for External Affairs P.V. Narasimha Rao announced that there was "substance" in the press reports that Sri Lanka had sought military help from the four countries even though the Sri Lankan Government had stoutly denied the reports. Rao made it clear that the "foreign power" against whom military help had been sought was

outside the region. It was made clear that implication that intervention by a third power might compel India to intervene and to remain involved and to remain cooperative.

What has caused considerable satisfaction in New Delhi is that the Indian position, which amounts to an Indian regional security doctrine, was immediately accepted, albeit tacitly, by all concerned. The foreign ministers of Pakistan and Bangladesh were in Delhi when Narasimha Rao made his pronouncements in the Lok Sabha. In informal conversations with the Indian foreign minister, the two foreign ministers made it clear that even if their government received any request for military help from Sri Lanka they had no desire to be involved in the Sinhala-Tamil conflict.

Charge d'Affaires Marion  
assured the Indian foreign  
minister that no request for help had been  
made from Sri Lanka by the US  
and that Washington did  
not want to get involved in the Sri Lankan  
conflict. Similar assurances were also  
received from Britain.

**Reaction:** Public opinion in  
India and Pakistan reacted ad-  
versely to the killing of Tamils in Sri  
Lanka. The four countries were  
concerned because among the victims were  
Tamil Muslims. Bangladesh Martial Law  
was imposed during Lt-General H.M. Ershad's  
scheduled state visit to India. In a cable to Jayewardene  
the same day, Ershad protested the  
intervention of Tamil Muslims in Sri Lanka  
and this as the reason for the  
cancellation of his visit. No such protest  
came from the Pakistan Government.

However, the killing of Tamil  
Muslims is not the only reason why  
India and Bangladesh have stayed  
out of the Sri Lankan developments.  
Even the main reason. In the  
state of India-Pakistan relations,  
Zia-ul-Haq has no intention  
of provoking India and de-  
railing that has been achieved in the  
years toward normalisation of  
relations. No ruler of Bangladesh  
contemplates getting involved in  
any anti-Indian military involve-  
ment in the region.

The Indian regional security doc-  
tors had a sobering impact not only  
on the rulers of Sri Lanka but also on the  
anti-Tamil Sinhala groups as  
well as the Tamil community.  
Jayewardene had a long telephone con-  
versation with Mrs Gandhi on August 5  
in course of which he assured her that  
he had not asked for external military  
aid or had the intention of doing so. He  
had personal envoy his brother,  
Jayewardene to New Delhi for  
a discussion on how the two coun-  
tries could cooperate to bring the conflict  
to an end and to rehabilitate the Tamil  
as quickly as possible.  
Jayewardene had two separate meetings  
with Mrs Gandhi and also met Rao and  
Foreign Ministry officials during  
his visit.

Extremist Sinhala elements re-  
mained an attempt to overthrow the  
regime. In fact, a coup might invite Indian or  
Asian intervention. The Tamil  
people on its own part realised that  
there would be no Indian intervention on  
their behalf and they must somehow learn  
to live in peace and harmonious coexistence.

—BHABANI SEN GUPTA



Biased Sri Lankan cartoon: a servile press

the security forces, for the Tamil Nadu coast  
is only 40 km by sea from Talaimannar. The  
Madras High Court did not help matters by  
ordering the release on July 28, on condi-  
tional bail, of three Tiger leaders held in  
prison in Madras, Uma Maheshwaran,  
Jotheeswaran and Sivanesan. The Tamil  
Nadu Government added fuel to the fire by  
not opposing the Tigers' bail application.

The anti-Tamil sentiment in Sri Lanka,  
therefore, metamorphosed into distinctly  
anti-Indian feeling as the troubled fortnight  
drew to an end. On July 31, a pseudonymous  
columnist, Migara, wrote in Colombo's *Sun*  
that Jayewardene feared imminent attack by  
India, and that Sri Lanka would seek exter-  
nal assistance if the attack came.

When UPI Correspondent Stewart  
Slavin was expelled from the country on  
August 2 for reporting that Sri Lanka had  
asked for military assistance from the United  
States, Britain, Pakistan and Bangladesh,  
the Government merely cited his violation of  
censorship rules, but only four days later  
officially denied his report. After the Lok  
Sabha had been agitated by the report, External  
Affairs Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao  
said the Government of India felt there was  
substance in it, and the External Affairs  
Ministry politely warned foreign missions in  
New Delhi that any armed interference in Sri  
Lanka would be considered as a move hostile  
towards India.

**Indian Concern:** When similar Sinhala  
violence against the Tamils was unleashed in  
August 1981—and in Jayewardene's regime  
it has exploded with clockwork precision  
every two years since 1977—an Indian  
tourist was killed and the president tele-  
phonically apologised to Prime Minister  
Indira Gandhi. This time, at least 2,500  
Indian citizens, most of them shoestring-  
budget tourists from Tamil Nadu journeying  
to Kataragama, a temple in Sri Lanka's deep

south, were trapped in the violence.

Narasimha Rao was refused permission  
to visit any camp when he flew to Colombo on July 28. "Rao ostensibly came to ex-  
press India's concern," says an official of  
Jayewardene's secretariat, "but he held out a  
veiled threat to the President that India  
might be forced to take 'drastic action' if the  
killings continued. Jayewardene told him to go ahead and carry out the threat."

Nevertheless, on August 7, two days  
before he sent his brother H.W. Jayewardene to  
New Delhi to discuss the crisis with Indian  
leaders, President Jayewardene directly ac-  
cused India of harbouring and helping Tamil  
terrorists. "If India decides to invade us," he  
had told the *Sun*, "we will fight and maybe  
lose, but with dignity." The message wasn't  
new, and indicated a deep-rooted anxiety.  
For last May Jayewardene had told *The Hindu* in a lengthy interview: "Supposing  
she (India) invades, our principles are not  
in any way tarnished by India's invasion.  
Take Sri Lanka and rule it. (You) can't rule  
15 million people if they are opposed to it. If  
I am alive I will carry on the movement  
against that invasion."

**Telephonic Talks:** The Government of  
India's response to this phobia was mea-  
sured, and yet firm. On July 31 Mrs Gandhi  
told Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.G. Ra-  
machandran, who led an all-party delegation  
to Delhi, that New Delhi viewed the Sri  
Lankan crisis as a national problem, and not  
as one confined to Tamil Nadu. On August  
5, Mrs Gandhi spoke to Jayewardene on the  
telephone, the second time in 10 days, and  
said that India would not interfere in Sri  
Lanka's affairs in any way.

"At the same time," the prime minister  
later told the Lok Sabha, "I pointed out to  
the president that developments in Sri Lanka  
affect us also. Sri Lanka and India are the  
two countries which are directly concerned."



Food queues in Colombo: like a war-torn city

Any extraneous intervention will complicate matters for both our countries."

That was the basis of India's strategic perspectives (see box) but it failed to take into account the traditional Sri Lanka insecurity with its northern neighbour which compels Colombo to bristle at times of such crisis. "From here," says a Colombo journalist, "our perception of India is obscured by her bulk. To our north-west looms Tamil Nadu, and to us the Tamils of India or of Sri Lanka are indistinguishable."

Indeed, Sri Lanka Tamil politics have frequently spilled over into Tamil Nadu, and the Tigers, the Tamil Eelam Liberation Front (TELF) and the TULF all have offices in Madras. Mrs Gandhi is obviously reluctant to lose all support in Tamil Nadu, where Chief Minister Ramachandran has played an off-again on-again game with the Centre in his relations. "There are 55 million Tamils in Tamil Nadu," says a senior official in the Home Ministry, "and if they are agitated about Sri Lanka we cannot ignore their sentiments."

The repercussions in India of the violence were not long in coming. The majority of the victims of violence were Indian Tamils, and at fortnight's end only a third of the refugees, numbering roughly 30,000, had chosen to wait in line to go to Jaffna by ship, air or train. Substantial numbers of Indian Tamils were trying to flee to India. Said a Tamil

businessman, who lost everything he owned: "No place is safe for us. The Indian Tamils feel they will be second-class citizens even in an Eelam ruled by the Jaffna Tamils. We will feel safe only in India."

**I**N JAFFNA, the Tigers were reported to be planning large-scale reprisals against the security forces, only holding themselves in abeyance until all the refugees left the camps in the affected cities. The army had been confined to barracks in the north after it killed at least 100 Tamils in retaliation for the ambush.

The Sri Lankan army has never seen action, and it totals only 14,000, with another 6,000 volunteers. Earlier this year 97 soldiers of the Raja Rata Rifles, a regiment created by Jayewardene, revolted in Jaffna and were sacked. Jayewardene himself has admitted that sections of the army are restive and rebellious.

**New Course:** On August 7, the day after Parliament passed the Sixth Amendment to the Constitution, outlawing parties that advocated separation, the 16-member TULF parliamentary group met in Vavuniya to decide future strategy. The TULF has been riven by internal strife in the recent past, with a vocal section

saying TULF should achieve the demands of the Tamils by resort to arms. The TULF MP's decided to take an oath forswearing separation of the Tamils.

The MP's will automatically lose seats if they do not attend Parliament three months. On August 9 the TULF said it would take to armed resistance to defend itself against a "savage form of state terrorism." At fortnight's end, the TULF had bough an appeal to the United Nations to send a peace-keeping force into Sri Lanka.

"The TULF was formed with non-violent objectives," said A. Amirthalingam, the party's secretary and leader of the Opposition in Parliament. "The people in the north are disturbed and can no longer live with the Sinhala people. Every refugee ship arriving in Jaffna, the tales of horrors, India should insist that the Sri Lankan Government respects law and order."

"The TULF could amend its objective to self-determination instead of separation," says another MP, "or we can operate underground right of self-determination includes the right to secede, but also to freely determine political status, which could be like Quebec in Canada. Our party cannot operate in present form." "The latest round of



Amirthalingam



Tamil refugees waiting in camps: "No place is safe for us"

a Tamil MP says TULF MP Neelan Tiruchelvam. MP's decided at the finishing touch to the eradication of separation. This time the Tamil national and entrepreneurial class has lost its Parliament.

**Giving Support:** The Indian Tamils had overwhelmingly voted for Jayewardene in the 1977 elections, and the promises he had bought the Ceylon Workers' Party, led by S. Thondaman, the largest union of Indian Tamil plantation workers, into the Government. But today, and leader, are reported to be reconsidering support if the Tamils continue to be subjected to a campaign of attrition.

The radicalisation of the TULF, and the organisation of Jayewardene's Tamil vote are only some of the products of the violence. As more and more affected people flee into the north, there are signs that support for a protracted and struggle for separation will snowball. The Tigers the kind of mass support so far been lacking. In a matter of days, the Sinhala-Tamil equation has permanently, and neither community believes it can exist alongside

the economic effects of the violence to be even worse. Already, Sri Lanka is reeling under an inflation rate of 20 per cent. This year's budget deficit

will amount to 23.4 billion Sri Lankan rupees (Rs 936 crore), and the country has been seeking increasing infusions of foreign aid. Other economic indicators are equally grim—a trade deficit of 21 billion rupees (Rs 840 crore), unemployment currently at a record high of 5 lakh, and a rupee that has been devalued, during the Jayewardene regime's six years, from 7.89 rupees to the dollar in 1977 to 24.20 after the latest devaluation on July 4.

**Unemployment:** Last fortnight's violence threw another estimated 50,000 people out of work, the majority of them Sinhala, and resulted in a loss of 3 billion Sri Lankan rupees (Rs 120 crore). Worse, foreign investors will now be wary of stepping into so volatile a situation. Refugee rehabilitation and reconstruction of the destroyed houses and factories will swallow huge chunks of money, and last fortnight Finance Minister Ronnie de Mel issued a desperate appeal to western nations for help.

The Tamils who have already fled Colombo, and those who will leave as soon as they can, will leave a yawning gap in key sectors of the bureaucracy and the trading communities of the cities. The Tamils dominated Sri Lanka's telecommunication service, the railways, and the postal administration, and these crucial services have already suffered grave setbacks because of staff losses.

Most seriously affected is Sri Lanka's image in the international community. Overnight, it has changed from a well administered paradise into a grotesque parody of Third World capriciousness. Condemnation of the killings and arson has been uniform worldwide, but Jayewardene faces his toughest problem in relations with neighbouring India, where attitudes have hardened and lasting distrust sown. What Sri Lanka required most urgently last fortnight was conciliation and statesmanship, but Jayewardene seemed incapable of providing either. Due in no small measure to the vacillation of its leader, the island republic had stepped to the brink of the precipice.

Midway through the violence and terror, Sri Lanka Foreign Minister A.C.S. Hameed took off for Geneva to attend a world conference on racism. That irony symbolised a government that had lost touch with one-fifth of its population, a ruling class that had brutally and callously pushed a minority into a corner from where it could only fight back with every shred of anger and ferocity at its command. Above all, the Government's indifference towards the long-term implications of the forces it had unleashed illustrated the cynical double standards that have taken firm root in Theravada Buddhism's "last citadel".

CHAITANYA KALBAG in Colombo

BIHAR

# Wielding The Axe

FOR THE past three years and two months Chief Minister Jagannath has lorded it over the state of Bihar almost like an absolute monarch. He has ridden roughshod over his foes and distributed largesse to his friends. But last fortnight, when a discreet but firm tug from the Congress(I) high command pulled the carpet from under his feet even many of his detractors were rubbing their eyes in disbelief.

Days earlier, he came out of a meeting with Mrs Gandhi in New Delhi apparently unruffled, and jauntily said: "I was not given an iota of a hint that I should quit." He said Rajiv Gandhi's attitude to him was "quite affectionate". As many as 60 Congress(I) MLAs from Bihar, camping for days in the capital, pleaded with the prime minister on his behalf.

When the string that held up the sword over Jagannath was finally snipped, few were left in doubt about who had wielded the blade. Rajiv, whose official charge included the two Hindi-speaking states of Himachal Pradesh and Bihar, had been wielding the broom from the word go. In April, within a month of his appointment, off went Ram Lal, the chief minister of Himachal Pradesh. And now the broom sweeps out Jagannath.

Not that the task was easy. Jagannath had the redoubtable record of lording it over Bihar (population: 7 crore) for more than five years, spread over two reigns. Except for Srikrishna Sinha (1946-1961), no chief minister of Bihar has held on to office for such a long spell. And as the state's 19th chief minister, Jagannath proved himself skilful—as a trapeze artist of Bihar's caste-ridden politics, as a master of realpolitik, and finally as an adroit survivor. Karpouri Thakur, former Bihar chief minister, and leader of the Opposition in the 325-member Bihar Assembly, once compared him to a "flat-bottomed barge that can brave any storm" while Abdul Rehman Antulay, the former Maharashtra chief minister, was likened by him to "a light little raft that easily overturns".

Jagannath's brave posturing cut little ice for once. His first significant act after returning from New Delhi was to dash down to Baidyanath Dham in Deoghar to pray to Lord Shiva. The dissidents were also not about to give up so easily and were staying on in New Delhi in the hope that the high command would take a decision. Said a pro-



minent dissident: "It is not without significance that the high command has not yet announced its decision."

The storm broke on July 26 when Jagannath stood up in the state Assembly to make a two-hour statement in which he took some uncharacteristic swipes at the Centre. Among the charges he made against the Centre were that:

► The state mined 40 per cent of the country's minerals but only got 14 per cent of the royalty earned. He claimed that he had "strongly pleaded with the Centre that the policy should be changed". He added that "the Centre is the buyer of our mineral products. It does not look nice that the



consumer should also fix royalty rates;

► The financial institutions were not being fair to the state. Jagannath did not mince his words: "I have told the chairman of the Industrial Development Bank of India to invest more in Bihar. I have also told the financial institutions in plain words that if everything we would not go to the Centre."

**Frantic Moves:** For the Congress high command, accustomed as it is to unconditional allegiance from its chief ministers, was evidently too great a show of independence. Almost immediately Jagannath was summoned to Delhi. Seeing this chance, the dissidents in the legislature party stepped up their campaign against the chief minister. Gathering at the house of L. Shahi, MLA, who was dropped from the cabinet earlier, they held hurried consultations and declared that Jagannath had forfeited his right to rule the state. Simultaneously they mobilised support in Delhi to convince the high command that unless Jagannath was removed now he would be a problem during the next elections. To bolster their arguments the dissidents trotted out examples of what they claimed were the chief minister's acts of defiance:

► In February Jagannath dropped 11 ministers, some of whom were considered keyweights in state politics, but did not leave 7 crore Delhi for nearly three months, though it was repeatedly called there;

► He had Ashwani Kumar Sharma, a Bihari MLA, suspended from the party;

► He attended a meeting held by the minority cell of the Pradesha Congress Committee(I) regretting the Centre's choice of Shyam Sunder Singh 'Dhiraj' as president of the state Youth Congress(I). Dhiraj had earlier been dropped from the post of deputy minister.

► At a meeting on July 27 at the Botanical Gardens he reportedly told his supporters that he had reshuffled his Cabinet at the instance of the high command. But at a meeting one of his supporters, Raghunath Jha declared that they would not accept a leader imposed by the high command.

**Uneasy Relationship:** His last act of defiance, couched in the hypocritical language of a man rationalising his defeat, might have been the proverbial last straw that broke the camel's back. But it was clear that Jagannath, despite the tight circle he had created around him, was because he

## INTERVIEW

**"I'm worried about the party"**

**THE REIGN** of Dr Jagannath, 48-year-old chief minister of Bihar, who bowed out of office last week, has been tinged with controversy from the start. He began his term with the public revelation of the gruesome blinding of undertrials in Bhagalpur. Towards the end, he aroused indignation nation-wide with his draconian press bill, which he ultimately withdrew—and even the point of his leaving was the subject of much speculation and discussion.

**INDIA TODAY Correspondent FARZAND AHMED spoke to Dr Jagannath the day after he had tendered his resignation. Excerpts from the interview:**

**Q. What, according to you, are the reasons for your ouster?**

A. It is wrong to say that I have been ousted. I have offered to resign on my own. Frankly speaking, a situation purely local in nature compelled me to resign, as an air of uncertainty has been created, and it was necessary to end this by resigning.

**Q. Who is responsible for this uncertainty?**

A. I do not know who is responsible. A handful of dissidents may feel happy, as they have always tried to create hurdles for me.

**Q. On leaving the chief ministership, do you have any worries?**

time after the reign of Srikrishna Sinha (April 1946 to January 1961) Bihar got a stable government as there was no major political agitation and people were fully with my government.

**Q. When did you first get the idea that you might be removed, and what did you think could be the possible reasons?**

A. For the past three months, I have been feeling that I may not last long as chief minister, but I did not know why I was being removed. One reason could be that I have always concentrated on my job of making the party strong and serving the people as well as implementing Mrs Gandhi's policies. My only fault was that I had never done any lobbying, because Mrs Gandhi was always affectionate to me.

**Q. Is it true that Rajiv Gandhi did not like you?**

A. I cannot say. But I never cared to lobby, so he got only one side of the story from my antagonists, and his opinion about me might have become biased.

**Q. What is your opinion about Rajiv Gandhi?**

A. My opinion is not different from that of others. I had worked with him, but I cannot make an assessment.

**Q. Do you think your growing popularity and strong measures to implement programmes have contributed to your ouster?**

A. It is true that the people and the partymen are with me. I have taken strong measures and ordered strict action against landlords, and a crack-down on the five biggest and 270 big landlords under the Land Reforms Act. These feudal forces have lately combined against me.

**Q. What are your plans for the future?**

A. I have offered my services to Mrs Gandhi and the party. From now onwards I am an ordinary member.

**Q. Does that mean you have no individuality?**

A. Yes, but individual thinking only in individual matters. As far as the party is concerned, it is for Mrs Gandhi to decide.

**Q. Do you think Bihar will have a stable government now?**

A. I have no comment, but it also depends on the man taking charge.

**"I never cared to lobby, so Rajiv got only one side of the story from my antagonists, and his opinion may have become biased."**

A. I am worried about the party. I had worked with Mrs Gandhi during the days of crisis and had actively contributed to its growth and popularity. Naturally I am worried. The Congress has never been strong in Bihar due to historical reasons and I have always tried and made it strong. In this process, I have suffered a lot and made sacrifices. It was during my leadership that the much-needed political stability was provided to the state—instability in the past had been the main reason for the state's backwardness. For the first

munities: Thakur's undoing was a blanket announcement of 60 per cent job reservation for the backward castes. With 29 Bhumihar MLA's and 31 Rajputs, it was obvious that Jagannath would give prominence to the two dominant groups in the 193-member Congress(1) Legislative Party.

His downfall came when he began moving away from the Bhumihar-Rajput groups, organising the Harijans and the backward castes, and carving out a personal following among the state's 17.5 per cent Muslims. Casting sceptics' opinions aside, he made Urdu the second language in the state. The madarsas were treated at par with the other educational institutions. Alim and fazil, the certificates of qualification issued by Islamic centres of study, were equated by a government fiat with university degrees. And the Harijans felt indebted to Jagannath when many of them were covered by a scheme of old age pension. Bihar was the only state to implement the scheme.

**Minority Factor:** There was a raucous outcry against what was alleged to be Jagannath's policy of appeasement. K.K. Tiwari, a staunch critic of the chief minister, and Lok Sabha member from Bihar, accused him of "pampering" the Muslims. This immediately brought a sharp reaction from the Muslim community, particularly from its powerful institutions like Anjuman Taraqee and Imarat Sharia. The final putsch by Jagannath came in February when he dropped 11 members of his ministry, notably Shahi, who is an important Bhumihar. Two other Bhumihars followed suit.

It was from this moment that Jagannath's hand slipped from the controlling levers. Little did he imagine that Shahi, his former agriculture minister, would emerge as the focal point of a brewing maelstrom of revolt against him. Lobbying untiringly for the ouster of Jagannath, he hustled up all the chief minister's critics in New Delhi. Last month, he delivered a major blow to Jagannath when, with the help of Tariq Anwar, the Youth Congress(I) president, and the blessings of Rajiv, he managed to instal Dhiraj as the chief of the Bihar Youth Congress(I). Once in office, Dhiraj added insult to Jagannath's injury by dissolving all the district units of his organisation and replacing them with ad hoc bodies loaded with his own men. Jagannath retaliated by floating a parallel Youth Congress(I), and getting 50 party MLA's to request Mrs Gandhi to take Dhiraj off the chief minister's back.

The high command, however turned a deaf ear to Jagannath's repeated requests for support. Apparently the decision had already been made: last fortnight's little

drama in New Delhi and Patna was only the *coup de grace*. And the decision was camouflaged by good intentions; because, for a long time, Jagannath had become the punching bag for righteous sentiments. "Everyone wanted his ouster," said Shahi with glee. On August 9, seven opposition parties in Bihar organised a bandh demanding his ouster. When it came about, the Opposition could not but clink glasses with the Congress(I) high command.

**Uncertain Future:** As the succession drama lingered beyond the fortnight, no definite picture could emerge out of the kaleidoscope of aspirants and favourites. But it was evident that the high command could ill afford to leave the responsibility of choosing Jagannath's successor to the Congress Legislature Party. Jag-

**Shekhar**  
**nt runner**

ress(I) Legislature Party. Jagannath clearly ruled the roost there. Within a day of the announcement of his decision to resign, as many as 130 Congress(I) legislators were in session at his house in Patna, drafting a resolution in favour of electing a leader from among themselves. To be sure, Jagannath's fellow Brahmins formed the single largest group in the state Assembly, with 36 members. The Muslims, constituting the fourth largest group with 26 MLA's, had strongly rallied behind the ousted chief minister.

The high command, particularly Rajiv, can still cram a leader of its own choice down the unwilling throat of the legislature party. This is exactly what happened after the removal of Antulay in Maharashtra, when the nondescript Babasaheb Bhosale was foisted on the legislature party. Bihar is a different kettle of fish. Antulay had descended on the Maharashtra scene unheralded. But Jagannath grew on the Bihar soil for over two decades under the tolerant eye of his brother, the late L.N. Mishra. During the Janata period, Jagannath toured practically every taluka in Bihar. The Bihar MLAs of today were handpicked by him. Admitted a former chief minister of Bihar: 'There are only two persons who have their fingers on the pulse of Bihar—they are Karpoori Thakur and Jagannath Mishra.'

With the general elections looming only 15 months away—unless there is a snap poll even earlier—Rajiv and Mrs Gandhi have gambled where the stakes are high. And Bihar is a particularly sticky wicket for them. In the 1980 general elections, when the Congress(I) rode the crest of a wave, Bihar gave them only 31 of its 54 MP's. For the Congress(I), Jagannath may be embarrassing as an ally, but he is certainly dangerous as an enemy.

—SUMIT MITRA with FARZAND AHMED in Patna

## THE OPPOSITION

# **Marriage Of Convenience**

**I**T WAS not exactly the kind of move that set the national political scene ablaze. But it did cause ripples in the normally placid world of opposition polities. And Mrs Gandhi reacted strongly, calling it "a joke" and "an insult to the Indian people". It was evident that the emergence of the Bhagtiya Janata Party (BJP)-Lok Dal alliance meant more to the ruling party than just another case of the worm turning.

After three months of near-misses in problems that unity efforts with Jagjivan Ram's Congress to bring ress(J), Charan Singh, the somewhat abrasive president of the Lok Dal, agreed to a non-left p an accord with his BJP counterpart Agar with a Behari Vajpayee, forming the Nanaji Lok Democratic Alliance (NDA) which vowed to evolve a concerted electoral strategy. Says Advani: "We should present a joint front against the Congress," Said Charan Singh: "People are as opposed to the Congress(I) and by and large will be in vote against it. But the opposition votes divided. The alliance is meant to cover that." Speaking of the alliance policy, implementar said: "We will organise all activities joining not just the elections."

More than a belated compromise, Charan Singh, it was a victory for Vajpayee's suave persuasion. On July 29, as merger between Charan Singh and Jagjivan Ram seemed crucially poised on the question of the latter's insistence that the BJP be kept out of the government, Vajpayee called on Charan Singh and spent hours seeking to convince him that if the choice was between the two, the BJP was a much better bet. Thus, in the political battle of wits between the three opposition veterans, Jagjivan Ram lost and was left isolated again.

**Coordination Moves:** Said BJP General Secretary Lal Krishna Advani: "The BJP was the first to have mooted the proposal of a united front. Lok Dal had been dithering for a long time because it wanted a complete merger which was not acceptable to us. Finally they changed their mind." As the fortnight ended, the two groups were making preparations for a joint meeting to form a steering committee and to elect its head. An immensely trickier issue—which could finish the alliance even before it found its feet. However, Charan Singh seemed likely to get the post, given his party's strength of 25 against the BJP's 16 in the Lok Sabha.

For Charan Singh, while the  
represents a step forward in his quest for

of a combined opposition, it fell far short of expectations. Doubts still persist between the two camps as to the exact meaning of 'unity'. While Charan Singh described it as 'just short of unity' and promised efforts to bring the groups closer, he emphatically said his party would do nothing to do with the merger moves. "we have always been saying we do something about evolving a common electoral strategy for the Opposition politics. And than make noise about unity which calling it a step towards merger," he said. "we have always been saying we will keep our symbol and name."

Dal alliance Charan Singh argues that any merger will fail to convince the BJP leadership feels it will create more problems than it solves and pre-empt Ram's efforts to bring over the non-left parties who agreed to baulk at the suggestion of a party dominant in the Lok Dal's economy and the BJP-RSS strategy. Says Advani: "We feel the Congress should first form a support base and I am sure there will be no further decision votes for merger as we function to continue."

**Strong-activities joint** The common support has been the major motivation for Vajpayee and the unity efforts of former feuding constituents as merger pre-Emergency Janata. Jagjivan Ram is in a chastened mood, he questions if the BJP be kept in the Madhya Pradesh municipal elections. At a recent battle of the party top brass realised that the party has lost its base. In spite of the tall launching a "rural clean up" movement" the leaders are convinced that they are still a dithering party and can never hope to be an alternative without a support base.

Lok Dal, on the other hand, has been desperately trying to balance its totally farmer-oriented outlook. Besides, Singh hopes to add substantially to its organisational muscle with the infusion of cadres. But more important, the thinking too seems to have been by the outcome of the recent election. An aide of Charan Singh: "After so long, now Mrs Gandhi seems to be getting away with the bloc Hindu vote. That would have finished the Oppo-

sition." This is a strong reason for Charan Singh's willing acceptance of the BJP which was once his party's main whipping boy.

**T**HE JOINT declaration of unity evades the question of dual membership. Says Charan Singh condescendingly: "There is nothing wrong with the BJP leaders' RSS connections as long as the RSS continues to be a cultural organisation. I believe in the Arya Samaj and can tomorrow be elected the president of Arya Pratinidhi Sabha which has nothing to do with politics. A change has come about in the BJP now as they do not allow its members to be RSS office-bearers." But his motivation becomes clearer when he says: "The Muslims vote for the Muslim candidates. But the Hindus have 2,376 clans. In spite of the fact that I have

1980: "The RSS is largely a party of shopkeepers. Whenever they find themselves forced to make a choice between the Congress(I) and any other opposition party they vote for the former. RSS people are, in fact, not as brave as they profess to be."

But while such amnesia is endemic to political leaders, Charan Singh is sure to have trouble from a section of the party rank and file who may have better memories. The first voice of discord came from Bihar as Sachidanand Singh, a member of the party's Central Parliamentary Board and National Executive, sent a cable to Charan Singh, demanding an immediate meeting of the National Executive to reconsider the step which was "mere opportunism and a historical blunder". Singh asserted that without the approval of the National Executive it was even unconstitutional.

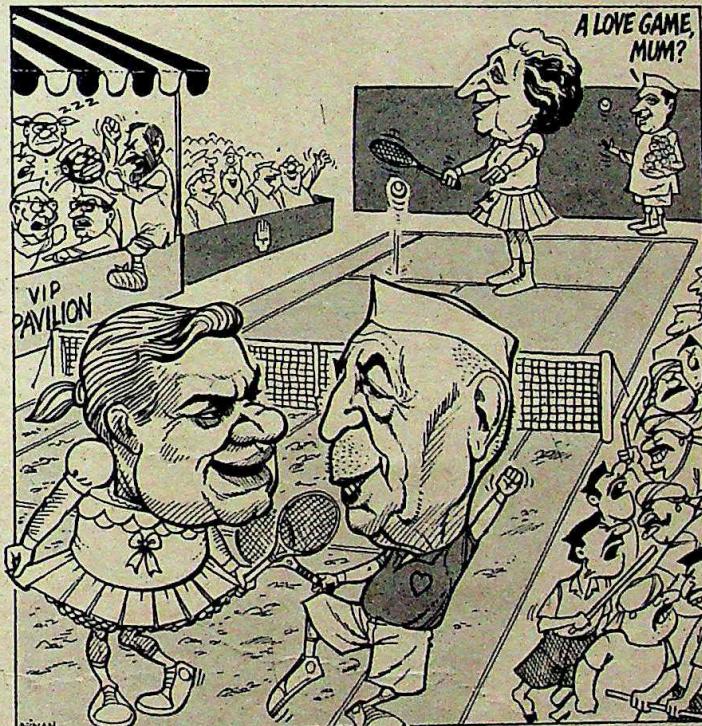
#### Controversial Procedure:

Countered Charan Singh: "There was no time to call a meeting of the full executive. So we called a small meeting which included the more important people. We have written to Sachidanand Singh reminding him that he too was present at the meeting which ratified the decision unanimously." The BJP does not show signs of dissidence but the RSS hardliners are certainly going to resent Charan Singh's almost inevitable election as the joint steering committee leader.

Watching the move closely from the sidelines last fortnight were the leaders of the Janata Party and the other fragments of the Opposition. Chandra Shekhar had called on Charan Singh to discuss possibilities of alliance shortly before Vajpayee did and, according to insiders, talks were still on. But the problem is the presence in the

Janata Party of Lok Dal prodigals Biju Patnaik, George Fernandes and Devi Lal, whom Charan Singh hates. On the other hand, for Subramaniam Swamy and Syed Shahabuddin the RSS is anathema.

Moreover, riven with internal bickerings, the Janata Party hardly seems capable of taking a firm decision acceptable to at least a majority of its leaders. In fact this may be the greatest hurdle in the path to wider opposition unity. Said a Congress(I) source: "We are not worried at all about the BJP and Lok Dal as they will never go beyond the Hindi heartland. But the inclusion of the Janata Party which is also capable of influencing the regional parties of the south, will be a different proposition."



been so impartial in my dealings, the Brahmins and Banias — they have never voted for me." Obviously the alliance with the BJP aims to bag for his party at least part of the caste Hindu vote.

Chandravati, the acerbic president of the Haryana unit of the Lok Dal is more candid. "There is no harm in aligning (with the BJP) because anything that promises even one more vote is welcome. I saw the campaign in Jammu where Mrs Gandhi left the BJP far behind." Charan Singh is now at pains to point out that even while the Janata Party was breaking up on the dual membership issue he "did not oppose the RSS too much". It was quite a turn-about for one who had told INDIA TODAY in September

**Internal Dissent:** But on present reckoning the ruling party faced no such threat as the dissensions within the Janata Party which came to the fore so prominently last fortnight, blocked the unity efforts of Chandra Shekhar. Trouble had been brewing since his rather hasty acceptance into the party of the Raj Narain-Banarsi Dass group in Uttar Pradesh, thus tilting the scales in favour of the former Socialists, much to the chagrin of Subramanian Swamy and his supporters. Dissident noises from the party's Uttar Pradesh unit increased as Chandra Shekhar, in his zeal to please the Raj Narain group, appointed 12 general secretaries there. And then to cap the dissensions came Swamy's veiled threat to contest the election for presidency due in October.

Says Swami: "What is wrong with my deciding to contest? In my opinion no one should remain president for more than four years. If I get elected I will move an amendment in the party constitution making this mandatory." Yet another jolt came with the resignation from the National Executive of former young turk and Harijan leader Ram Dhan who protested against what he described as Chandra Shekhar's "casual" style of functioning but made the sensational observation in his resignation letter that he had no place in the party as he did not "have connections with goondas and undesirable elements"—an obvious reference to the allegation that Chandra Shekhar patronises some such persons of his Rajput community.

**Expansion Possibilities:** In fact, the Congress(S), which has had some kind of an understanding with the BJP in Maharashtra, and the Congress(J) seemed to be the only parties still likely to join the NDA bandwagon. Said Charan Singh, mixing optimism with sarcasm: "Babu Jagjivan Ram has his complexes. He is harming himself. But you never know what he decides ultimately because human psychology is not a science and the same man may react differently in similar circumstances." But even the inclusion of these parties may not mean much in real terms—unless the Janata Party has a change of heart.

Mrs Gandhi seems to be one of the few people in the capital who do not dismiss the new alliance as yet another of those stillborn political mongrels. While her reaction reflected her concern, she accepted before a Youth Congress(I) gathering that the alliance "could cost us some votes in the Hindi-speaking areas and though I do not bother about winning or losing the elections I will feel sorry for the Congress party". But while not many were prepared to bet on the prospects of the alliance surviving its inherent contradictions it had at least added a new dimension to the hitherto tepid opposition scenario.

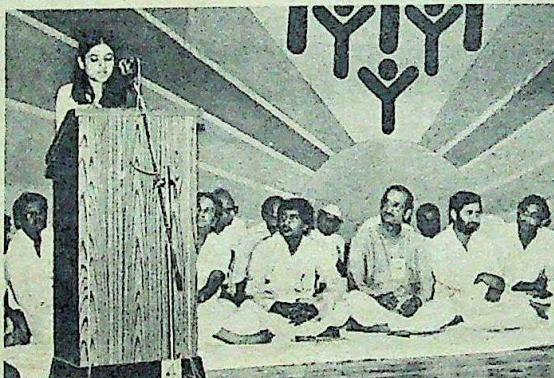
SHEKHAR GUPTA

MAHARASHTRA

## Hotch-Potch

"YOUTH is ganging up against us," was Lok Dal President Charan Singh's reaction when asked to attend the Pune All-Party Youth Convention organised by Congress(S) MP from Maharashtra, Suresh Kalmadi. But most other opposition leaders obviously decided that whether youthful or not, they should be part of the show. In addition, student leaders, journalists, social workers and middle-aged representatives from opposition parties congregated at the extravagant convention which Kalmadi had billed as a new orientation to the youth movement.

The delegation of the middle-aged included Janata Party President Chandra



Maneka at the convention: youth vs age

Shekhar, Jammu & Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah, Democratic Socialist Party President H.N. Bahuguna, Congress (S) President Sharad Pawar as well as such almost forgotten names from the past as I.K. Gujral and Mohan Dharia.

Their seniority, however, was not spared. Maneka Gandhi, president of the Rashtriya Sanjay Manch made pointed digs at the "senior leaders" and "senior parties" present, perhaps to emphasise her own 26-year-old youthfulness. She insisted that the senior parties use their youth wings only for doing the donkey work at election time and did not incorporate youth into the main decision-making body—just as they had not when the Lok Dal-BJP alliance had been made. Then, along with her followers, Maneka walked out of the hall, piqued at the organisers for not including her name in the list of speakers.

**Lavish Arrangements:** Yet another woman politician, Ambika Soni of the Congress(S), had her pound of flesh. After having lost a Rajya Sabha nomination to Kalmadi, Soni bluntly attacked the rather

lavish style of the convention organised. "This staying in five-star hotels, travelling in airplanes and holding NAM-style conventions in air-conditioned halls will not solve anything," she said. Delegates had been flown down, provided cars, booked into various hotels and clubs. A NAM-style press room with closed circuit colour TV, teleprinters and secretaries was also set up.

Those who had come expecting a convention to be a continuation of Opposition unity meetings series started in Karnataka and Delhi, were disappointed. Anything, signs of disharmony were evident. The BJP objected to Abdullah's speech affirming his nationalism, because it felt that was using the convention platform to denounce his Jammu & Kashmir resettlement bill. Some members of the Hindu Ekta Andolan tried to disrupt the massive rally in the city by throwing chappals and releasing a few non-poisonous snakes into the audience.

He, however, hit back at them by saying "Farooq Abdullah will remain Hindustani," to a wild cheering crowd.

**Hard-hitting Speech:** In opening address, though, crusader journalist Arun Shourie appealed to youth leaders not to be tails of politicians but to lead the way—to return, in fact, to Gandhiji's type of self-discipline. Students, for example, instead of agitating for reduction in fees would do better to ask for examination reform, an end to copying. The trend of "competition in grievance-mongering only ends in creating Frankenstein-like Bhindranwale," he warned.

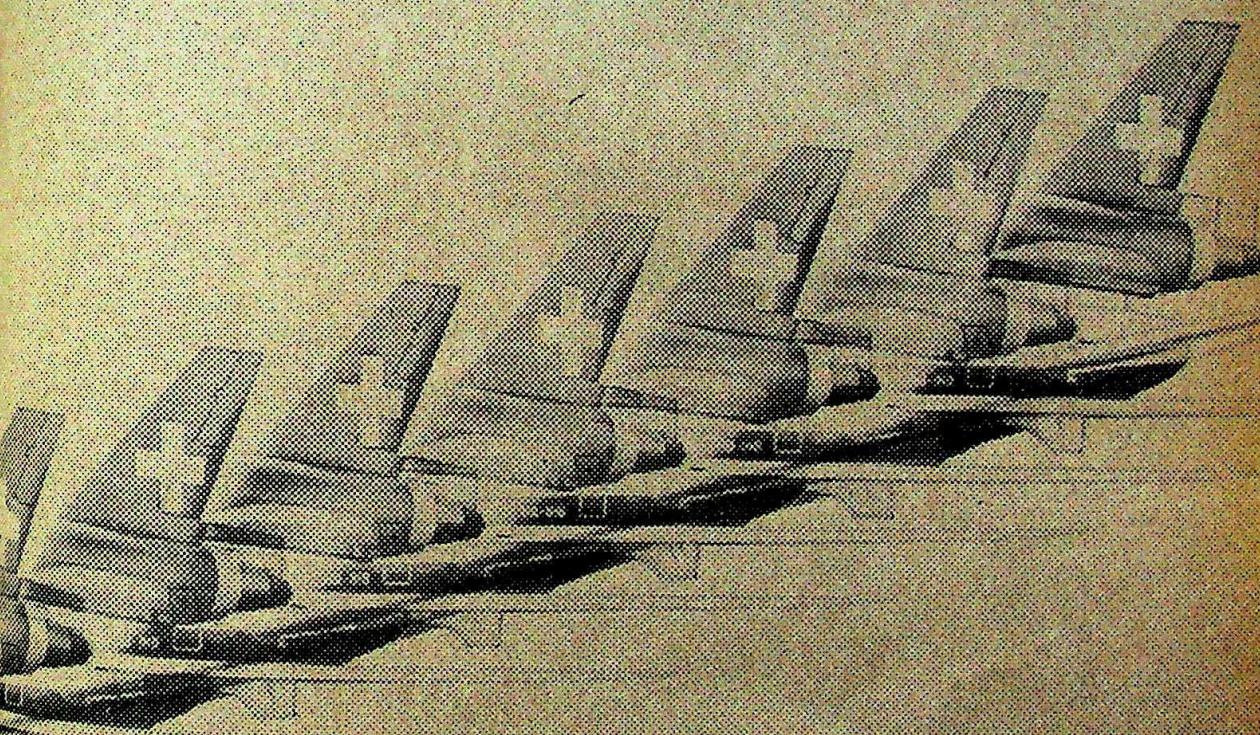
Shourie urged the youth to force the leaders to speak in specifics and not in generalities. An opposition which, he noted, was far more gifted than the ruling party, failed to make any headway toward unity because of pettiness. He pointed to recent opposition talks on Punjab which bogged down in preparing nine draft resolutions instead of getting down to specific demands.

Typically, however, the youth meeting ended with a nine-point charter of demands including a plan for constitutional guarantees of employment, reduction in voting age, implementation of the employment guarantee scheme—all of which, Maneka Gandhi, remarked, were already part of her party's manifesto. Kalmadi announced that a meeting of the Youth Action Committee would be held in Delhi at the end of the month to finalise a further line of action. Shourie appealed for specific action—made only a couple of hours before—had apparently been forgotten.

—COOMI KAPOOR

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KERALA

A policeman tends to a victim: increasing violence

## Political Mayhem

ALL OF Chief Minister K. Karunakaran's efforts have failed to bring political harmony to the lush green state of Kerala which stands an unenviable first in political slayings. After a deceptive lull last year, the graph is once again on the rise: the number of political murders in the state fell from 48 in 1981 to 29 in 1982 but rose again to 22 in the first seven months of this year. There has also been a shift in the pattern: of the 22 political workers killed between January and July 1983, no less than 10 were from the Congress(I); most victims in the past were from the militant parties, the

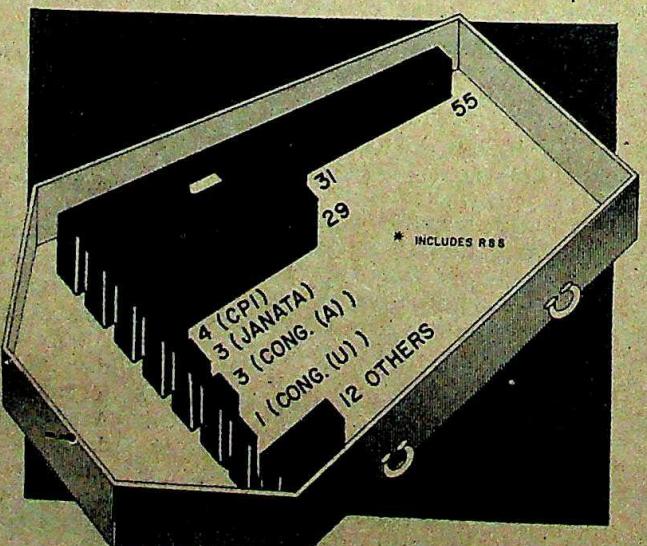
Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), who have long been on the warpath against one another. Fumed state Home Minister Vayalar Ravi of the Congress(I): "The Marxist theory of annihilation of its political rivals has been responsible for the recurring political violence in the state. They have been exploiting our policy of peaceful coexistence."

Ravi's statement may have political overtones, but the statistics show that every third murder in the state is politically motivated. In the last three years, at least 138 political workers have lost their lives in over 1,000 cases of violent political clashes. Issues



*"The Marxist theory of annihilation of political rivals has been responsible for the recurring political violence in the state."*

—Vayalar Ravi, state home minister



*"The Government consists of warring communal elements who have injected the communal virus into Kerala's body politic."*

—E.K. Nayanar, former Marxist chief minister

that the ballot or negotiations have settled, are being increasingly settled lethal weapons.

**Political Motivation:** Ironically, Government's otherwise commendable performance in controlling other crime has gone largely unnoticed because of the burgeoning political violence. The state ranks eighth in the all India crime situation with only 100 crimes registered under various Indian Penal Code sections. As against 4,000 murders in Uttar Pradesh last year, Kerala's figure is only 140. Said Karunakaran: "Criminals not our own culture. But for stray incidents of political fights, ours is one of those states which have been able to keep the crime situation under control." In contrast, Uttar Pradesh, only about 10 of 4,000 killings in 1982 were political.

According to political analysts, political killings are due to the activities of the RSS, Marxists can be blamed for the Congress(I) and CPI(M). Said Ravi: "RSS workers frequently clash with the Marxists in Kerala. The RSS have had a 'no-nonsense' policy of these parties in squaring up to them. Kerala's responsible for political murders in the state. In fact RSS was the first organisation to take a militant attitude towards the Marxists."

**Past Record:** To buttress his claim, Ravi disclosed that out of every four political clashes, the CPI(M) was involved in three. RSS in two and the Congress(I) in only one. In 1980, the CPI(M) was involved in 535 of 653 political clashes and was allegedly responsible for 17 of the 33 political murders that year. In 1982, when the party was out of power, it was involved in over 750 of 1,000 clashes and its cadres or sympathisers caused 15 of the 29 political murders. And during the first seven months of 1983, CPI(M) workers have been named in over 150 political clashes with the other two parties. Surprisingly the party lost the largest number of its workers—19 in all—when it was in power. In all 52 CPI(M) workers have been killed.

between 1980 and June 1983, allegedly political enemies.

Ironically, commendable progress has been made. Of the 1,065 cases in 1980, 280 were involved in 1981, 300 in 1982, and 310 in 1983. In 1981, 17 members of the RSS cadres were killed, followed by 5 in 1982. The RSS leaders, on their part, hold communal responsible. Said E.K. Nayanar, former Indian People's Front chief minister: "The United Front Government consists of some of those same communal elements who have injected the communal virus into Kerala's politics."

In contrast, the process, however—the CPI(M) alleges—the RSS has moved closer to Congress(I). This, they say, is because the RSS can offer a political alternative to Congress(I) in the state. The RSS and Kerala. The two have hardly crossed each other's paths in Kerala's bloody politics—barring one instance of May 30, 1983, in which a worker was killed by an RSS worker.

His claim, Ravi said, four political murders also makes in three districts where, according to the first militant attitudinal report, Congress(I) workers

in only one was allegedly killed. In West Bengal, another Marxist party was over 750 of its pathisiders. And due to the party's flag flying. Between April 1983 and June 30, 32 party activists were two paraded and 923 injured in 250 clashes. The largest reason of the panchayat elections the toll was unusually high, but the workers have exposed even more clearly the violence dominating West Bengal.

Bloody confrontation began in the early '70s when Youth Congress(I) workers launched a violent campaign against Naxalites and other Marxist groups. The Marxists were with their accusations but the trend continued when the Marxists won power in 1977. Congress(I) leaders say that over 100 party workers have been killed, allegedly by the Marxists, in the last six years. Ananda Gopal Mukherjee, West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee(I) president and Rajendra Kumari Bajpai, India Congress Committee(I) general secretary, last year submitted two sealed memorandums listing the charges against the Left Front Government.

**Official Report:** The Left Front

equally powerful political foes has aggravated the situation. For example, Cannanore district—where the RSS and the CPI(M) each has a fairly large following—has seen the largest number of political clashes between the two parties. Similarly in Trivandrum, the CPI(M) has faced strong and invariably violent resistance from the Congress(I). Interestingly enough, in districts like Palghat, which is dominated by the CPI(M) and in the Muslim dominated Malappuram, there have been very few clashes.

Yet another revealing aspect is that the murders cut across communal lines. Contrary to the general belief, the victims of RSS-CPI(M) confrontation are invariably Hindus and not Muslims. Said a state BJP leader: "Despite our commitment to a non-violent approach to politics, our workers and well-wishers have been intimidated and provoked by our opponents. We can't sit back with folded hands, after all it is a question of our survival too."

So many people in Kerala are resorting to violence because of the snail's pace at which police investigations move. Only one in 10 accused of political murder is convicted. Most go scot-free. In 1981, of 48 cases of political homicide, the alleged assailants were acquitted in 18 cases. Ultimately only four were convicted. Admitted a senior po-

lice official of Kerala: "These cases are very sensitive because the political climate changes very frequently. If we pursue cases against a political party, it will be vindictive against us when it assumes power."

**Lawlessness:** As a result, a majority of the murder cases have not been properly investigated during the last three years. Half of the 1980 murder cases were pending in the state's courts in June 1983. At the same time the various political groups have become more brazen. Relatives and supporters of the victims—since they failed to get speedy justice in the courts—have taken law into their own hands. Said M.M. Thama, a Naxalite in Trivandrum: "Since majority of the killings have been done to take revenge, it is evident that people are losing faith in the judiciary and the police."

A rather desperate Karunakaran and Ravi have begun negotiating with the different parties to evolve some kind of code of conduct. The need is immediate if the state is not to become a battle ground for bloody power grabbing. Admitted Ravi: "Each one of us will have to assess the situation in terms of gains and losses. More than political workers, it is the very fabric of democracy which is at stake."

—PRABHU CHAWLA with  
SREEDHAR PILLAI in Trivandrum



Congress(I) (left) and Marxist election graffiti: shock tactics

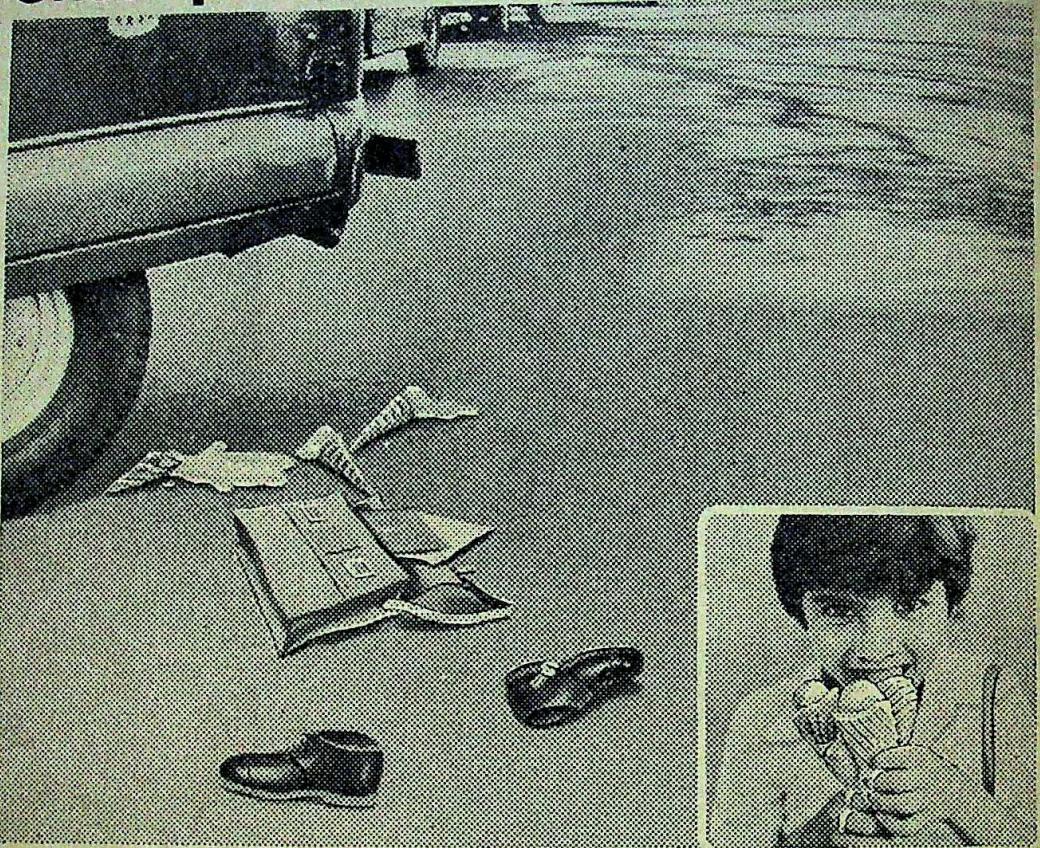
Government has repeatedly refuted Congress(I) allegations but following the massacre of 14 CPI(M) activists in Maldia—Union Railway Minister A.B.A. Ghani Khan Choudhury's parliamentary constituency—it began compiling statistics of political clashes. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had also sought the state Government's reaction to alleged large-scale killings of Congress(I) workers during last May's panchayat poll campaign.

The report, signed by the then acting chief minister Benoy Chowdhury documented 14 Congress(I) workers' deaths; the toll of CPI(M) activists was about 10. More CPI(M) activists died during the campaign

than Congress(I) but after the election the trend was reversed. For example, between April 15 and May 31, polling day, eight CPI(M) workers were killed as against five Congress(I); between June 1 and June 30, nine of the 17 political murders were of Congress(I) workers. During this period 257 Congress(I) workers were injured as against the CPI(M)'s 111.

According to the state Government, these clashes took place over wall space for political graffiti and election posters. As no party is willing to ask its workers to desist from such tactics, West Bengal is unlikely to see peaceful elections in the foreseeable future.

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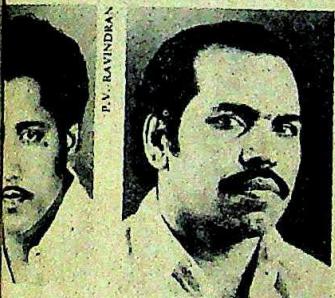


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# est Fracas

COALITION politics generally involves a continuous tightrope act for survival. The Karunakaran Ministry in Kerala has muddled from one crisis to the next in the past 15 months. The latest to test its unity is the impasse over who to clear the rich forests of Idukki of encroachers.

moves to evict those who encroached January 1, 1977—earlier encroachments having been regularised—have stiff opposition from some constituents of the coalition, particularly the two Congress factions. These two—the Mani groups—have 14 of the 77 seats of the coalition; enough, that is, to oust the Government if they vote with opposition in the 141-member Assem-



P.V. RAVINDRAN

Jacob and Nooruddin: at odds

95 per cent of the encroachers are as a major vote bank of the Kerala coalition.

Kerala Forestry Board, set up to appraise people aware of the urgent need for action, estimates that 23 per cent of the forest area in the state has been depleted in the last 60 to 70 years. In the last two years the area covered by natural forests has gone down from 10,08,000 hectares in 1980 to 9,30,000 hectares in 1981.

The task of eviction itself presents a challenge. For even those who settled before have not yet received title deeds. And there are reports of large-scale transplants of mature coconut palms and teak trees to recently deforested land. Nooruddin, the state's Forest Minister said that encroached since 1977 are to be on the basis of joint inspection by revenue officials. He stated that areas of land encroached upon after a year have been cleared and teak planted in the Kottayam and Thrissur circles. However, this process is not an easy

one. Education Minister T.M. Jacob of the Kerala Congress (Joseph) has taken up cudgels on behalf of the encroachers. He argues that the Government policy is wrong as it would displace thousands of farmers and destroy their houses and productive rubber and coconut plantations. The Chairman of the Kerala Congress (Mani) A.O. Lukose said that in certain pockets of Idukki district, several panchayats would become deserted after the evictions, resulting in closure of churches, schools and ration shops.

The CPI(M) has also strongly opposed the evictions, describing the move as a travesty of forest protection. Said E.K. Nayanar, former CPI(M) chief minister: "While big-time encroachers go scot-free, the poor peasants who shed their sweat and tears over the years to make a living are unnecessarily being harassed."

When the matter came up in the state Assembly, a member from the Kerala Congress (Joseph) walked out of the house. Soon after the forest minister reiterated the decision to go ahead with the evictions, the Kerala Karshaka Union (J), the agricultural wing of the Kerala Congress (Joseph), warned that those who meddled with the encroachers would never be re-elected. The union also charged that the Forest Department is extracting bribes from encroachers.

In spite of heavy opposition, Chief Minister Karunakaran has reiterated his determination that encroachers must be evicted. If it lasts, this is a welcome change in one who has been forced to reverse a number of major decisions during the 15 months that his coalition has been in power.

—SREEDHAR PILLAI

## JAMMU & KASHMIR

# Sordid Story



THE AFFAIR had bits of everything: crime, illicit romance, a murder plot. Last month, in the border areas of Jammu & Kashmir, two smugglers and a couple were involved in one of the most spectacular cases the police have been confronted with.

This was the case of Nassar Khan and Rashid Khan, both 30, two friends who criss-crossed the line of actual control (LAC), between Kupwara district 100 km northwest of Srinagar and Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK), cattle lifting and smuggling. Two years ago, in the course of one such foray across the border, Rashid married pretty Resham Jan, the sister of one of their smuggling contacts Hayat Khan of Muzaffarabad. Unfortunately for the couple, Nassar attracted to his friend's wife, drew

Resham into an affair. When her husband found out he told Hayat that he was planning to kill his rival. He took Nassar to a desolate place near the LAC on September 17, 1982, and shot him. Then Rashid floated a rumour that the police in POK had arrested him for smuggling.

But then, sometime early this year,



Jan and Khan: grim fate

Rashid's plans went awry. Hayat decided to spill the beans because Rashid had begun ill-treating his sister. He informed Lassa Khan, 50, of the real reason for his son's absence. Lassa swore to avenge Nassar's death.

**Ghastly Follow-up:** Before he could act, Rashid in collusion with an associate, Liaqat Khan, a rice smuggler, swung into action. On April 3, 1983, Liaqat was the bearer of a letter purported to have been written by Hayat to Lassa, requesting for a meeting at the border, as the issue was urgent. Not dreaming that it might be a trap, Lassa and his wife's nephew, Mansoor Khan, went with Liaqat to the Wuyan forest only a few kilometres from the LAC. Rashid lay in wait for his quarry. The two were shot and robbed. To leave no traces, the bodies were burnt and the skeletons buried.

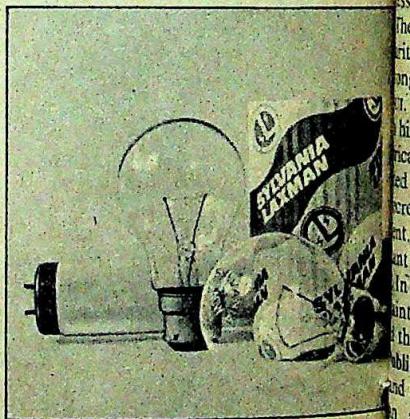
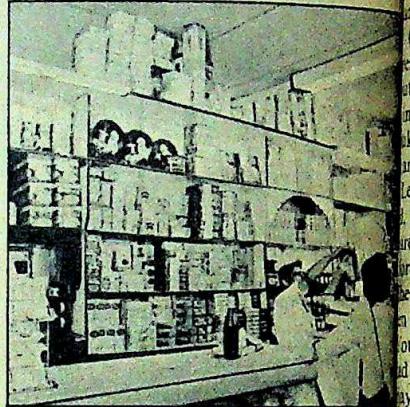
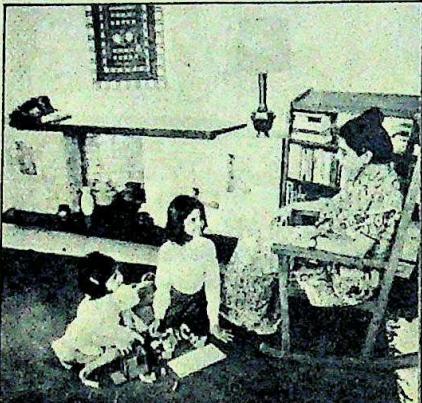
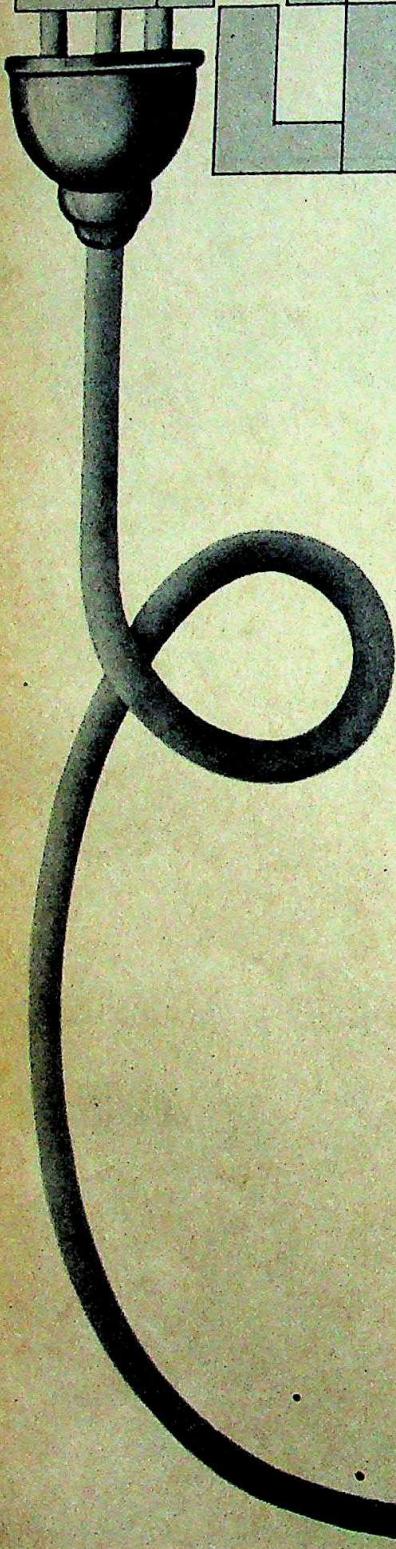
Rashid could not wash his hands off this ghastly sequence of murders quite so easily. Suspicious, the crime branch arrested both Liaqat and Rashid to question them on the many disappearances. Interrogation revealed nothing, till police dog Robbin led the investigation squad to the scene of the crime. Rashid confessed the whole sordid story.

The police were interested by yet another angle to this murder case. The Inspector General of Police involved in the case, M.M. Khajooria, said: "The revolver and the two 12-bore guns we've confiscated are of the Pakistan ordnance markings."

And from murder to the relevance of this international border, a case was filed in a local court seeking to push Resham back into POK as she had entered without any valid documents. The case was not pursued for, in the words of a conundrum posed by a local lawyer who was to plead her case, "the POK is a part of the state and how can they call her entry illegal?"

—GHULAM NABI KHAYAL

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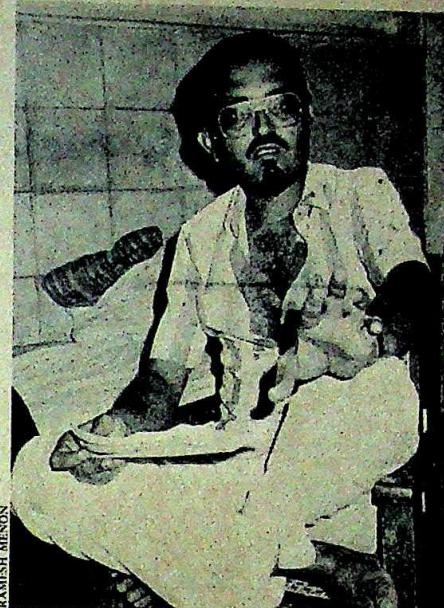
## Leading Blows

DISSIDENCE can be carried too far, as events last fortnight at the Gujarat Pradesh Congress (I) Committee (GPCC-I) office in Ahmedabad proved. A group of young men storming premises, grabbed Jayesh Shah, secretary of the National Students Union of India (NSUI), the student wing of the Congress (I), rained blows on him, dragged him and beat him up with lathis. They in the presence of GPCC(I) Secretary Bhagwan Patel, cornered NSUI President Rakesh Mankad, and flung a chair at his head. Leaving a bleeding Shah and Mankad unharmed, the miscreants fled. The few officers and reporters in the office crouched for cover.

The incident highlighted the differences between the warring groups in the NSUI and Youth Congress. A war between Shah and the group opposed to him, led by Kella, secretary of the Youth Congress, has been brewing for a few months. The reason: Mankad was gaining in popularity with the students and was becoming a danger. Kella is a former president of NSUI.

In his complaint to the police, Mankad ironically said that he and Shah were supported by Kella, Shivkumar Chauhan, secretary, state NSUI, Rajendra Anchal, joint city NSUI and Jayanti Kapasi, a member of state Home Minister Prabodh Raval. In their turn, the four filed a counter complaint that Shah and Mankad had assaulted them. No arrests have been made.

**Public Accusation:** Mankad, one of the leading student leaders who led the Navnirman agitation which overthrew the Patel ministry, gave a dramatic account of the incident by publicly alleging that he was beaten at the instance of Raval. Said the Congress (I) should be ashamed of itself. Though I am a part of the party, I am not going to take such humiliations down." Commenting on the Raval said: "Mankad has been agitating to withdraw some police stations where some of his friends were investigating. Would any sensible person send goondas into his party office?" "The charge is ridiculous. Would any sensible person protest against the shoddy way the party circles by calling for a strike in protest against the shoddy way the seats for eleventh standard science students was being handled. He eloquently castigated Raval and the Education Department. Raval also holds the education



RAMESH MENON

Mankad: assaulted

education portfolio—for issuing faulty marksheets and for the lack of reassessment facilities.

The group of NSUI members opposed to Mankad is also opposed to Izzad Mirza, MP, president of the state Youth Congress and secretary of the GPCC(I). Youth Congress activists like Kella and Jitendra Shah, municipal councillor, want to dislodge them from these coveted posts. Late this fortnight Kella and other NSUI and Youth Congress members were camping in Delhi to persuade the high command to replace Mirza. Mankad and Shah were also there to push their thesis that Raval was the trouble maker. Efforts by Pravin Engineer, convenor of the GPCC(I) complaints cell, to patch up differences drew a blank. The war is on. —RAMESH MENON

### ANDHRA PRADESH

## Cease Fire

THE CLIMB DOWN was inevitable. On August 3, 19 days after the government employees' strike began, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao agreed to put down in writing the oral assurances made before the strike began, ending one of the most acrimonious conflicts in the history of the state's administration. In retrospect, it was a conflict that could have been avoided if it had not been for the belligerence on both sides.

At first, the Action Committee of Employees and Workers (ACEW) did not expect the near total response to its strike call. In the end, this was what gave them the

decisive edge—the Government, in addition to what was agreed earlier, conceded some minor economic demands and agreed to give them pay for the entire strike period by writing it off as leave. Emphasised ACEW Chairman B. Purnachandra Rao: "For once economic demands were secondary. Our basic rights as employees were wrested through the ordinance. The strike helped us regain these rights."

**Understandable Jubilance:** Purnachandra Rao's jubilance was understandable. The main target of the strikers was the withdrawal of the safeguard in the fundamental rules protecting those already in service from any adverse effect of changes in the rules. Rama Rao and official spokesmen argued the safeguard had only been withdrawn temporarily to strengthen the Government's hands in the case before the Supreme Court challenging the decision lowering the retirement age from 58 to 55. But they agreed orally to restore the safeguard once the Supreme Court gave its verdict.

The Government's refusal to give written assurances and the ruling Telugu Desam party's efforts to mobilise public opinion against the agitation, hardened the strikers' stand. Even after the Supreme Court concluded hearing of the arguments on July 27, when Purnachandra Rao asked the Government to give its commitment in writing, state Information Minister Venkatarama Jogayya said the Government would not budge.

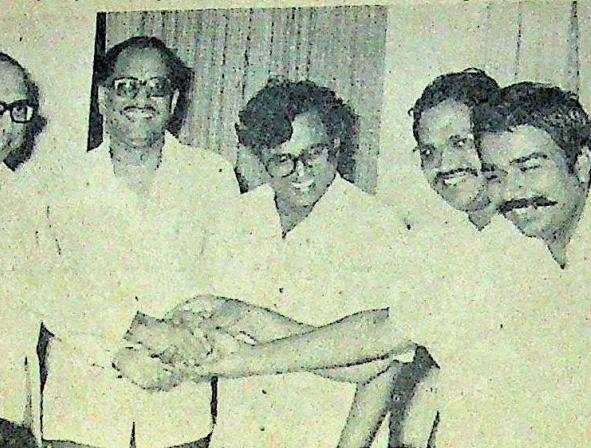
The change came two days later when G.V. Ramakrishna took charge as chief secretary of an administration that had stopped work. And when ACEW representatives made a courtesy call on him at the Lake View Guest House to greet him on his appointment the suave Ramakrishna invited them to the negotiating table. And in the end the agreement turned out to be within reach. Said the cigar-chomping chief secretary: "It was more like a family quarrel. Neither the employees nor the Government can do without the other. Some misunderstandings had to be cleared up and confidence restored."

It was a tribute to Ramakrishna's negotiating skill that the strike ended less than a week after he took charge. But by a twist of irony the two demands which the Government did not agree to—supplying rice at Rs 2 a kilo to all irrespective of income, and doles for the jobless—were both included in Rama Rao's election manifesto. The chief minister who skilfully avoided meeting journalists from July 10 till the strike was called off told an impromptu press conference: "I would never think of causing any harm to government employees who are the wheels of administration and my brothers. I would retire in grace if my actions or that of my govern-

ment were detrimental to any section of the people of the state." Added Telugu Desam General Secretary P. Upendra: "There was no question of victory or defeat for anybody in a family squabble. Our party has nothing against the employees or their legitimate demands."

**Unprecedented Support:** Others did not see it in the same light. Commented Janata Party legislator S. Jaipal Reddy: "The employees have won their inalienable trade union rights." Adds ACEW Secretary-General M.A. Rehman: "This is

the most successful strike of white collared workers. Usually we get only half of what we demand but this time nearly 90 per cent of our demands were conceded. Equally important is the written assurance that employees' representatives will be consulted on issues related to service conditions before



Ramakrishna (left) with ACEW leaders: smooth negotiation

any decision is made."

In private union leaders also admit they succeeded because for once unions which differed merely because they represented the interests of employees from the Telengana or Andhra region were wholly united and ensured the strike was totally peaceful. To thank

the employees for the preceeded support leaders stood outside Secretariat and other offices to greet them the day after the strike was called off. Surprisingly Rama Rao was also cheered as he entered the Secretariat.

Whether the gesture goodwill will give a badly needed boost to the state Government's relations with its employees remains to be seen. To a large extent it depends on the less Rama Rao has learnt from the strike.

But by the end of the fortnight, tensions ease

and expectations rose about the impending Supreme Court verdict. But whichever way the decision goes Rama Rao is going to have to take the lead in order to restore employees' sagging confidence in administration.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

## INDORE

# Rolling Home

IT STARTED as a bit of a lark. But at the end of nearly three gruelling days, three youngsters—Nagesh Vyas, 20, Vijay Vaidya, 15, and Sikandar Shukla, 15—found they had set a new national record by staying on their skates for 70 hours.

The most remarkable part about their effort was that none of them really had any intention of pursuing a record when they started. All they had intended was to take part in a skating competition organised by the Madhya Pradesh Roller Skating Association. Vyas, who teaches children to skate in his spare time had in fact told his family that he would be back for dinner.

It was only half way through the competition that Suman Kamani, the president of the association, desperately called up the general secretary of the all-India body in Chandigarh and found out that the national record of 56 hours had been set by a 24-year-old named Raghubir Singh back in 1964. Says Kamani: "Frankly, I didn't expect anyone to last more than 30 to 35 hours so I hadn't bothered to check the national record."

**True Grit:** Seventy hours may not be a record that will survive a serious challenge. But what was impressive about the competition was the spirit: 42 contestants

started off, each trying to last as long as he or she—there were six girls—could. Durga Pawar, a girl less than 10 years old, managed to keep rolling for 12 hours. Rohit Jaiswal, also in the under-10 category, stayed on for 25 hours 45 minutes. The average age of the contestants was about 18 years. Says Vyas: "I guess it was the performance of the children that kept us going. If they could stay on for that

long, we would have to stay on for twice or thrice as much!"

Through the day, and through the night, as music from a turntable blared to keep away monotony there was a steady crowd of friends to encourage the skaters. Though, after every three hours, a five-minute break was permitted, none of the three joint winners took a break in the first 27 hours. Says Shukla and Vaidya together: "We wanted to be the last in the rink—that was all we had in mind." Both of them are school students, and were part of a team which, some months ago, went 190 km from Indore to Bhopal on skates.

As the hours crept by, the back aches and the strain in the calf and thigh muscles grew—and a doctor stood by to carry out check-ups. But the real problem was staying awake. Even then the boys could possibly have carried on for longer except for the fact that Indore Collector A. Jogi requested the organisers to put an end to the gruelling test. He was acting on the fears of some parents that the strain might be too much for the boys.

What makes the feat even more interesting is that there are no practising facilities in Indore—in the entire state Bhopal has the only skating rink—and children make do normally with a long lobby in Indore's Nehru Stadium. But perhaps it all boils down to a question of will power. Or is it wheel power?

—SREEKANT KHANDEKAR in Indore



(From left) Shukla, Vaidya and Vyas: gruelling feat



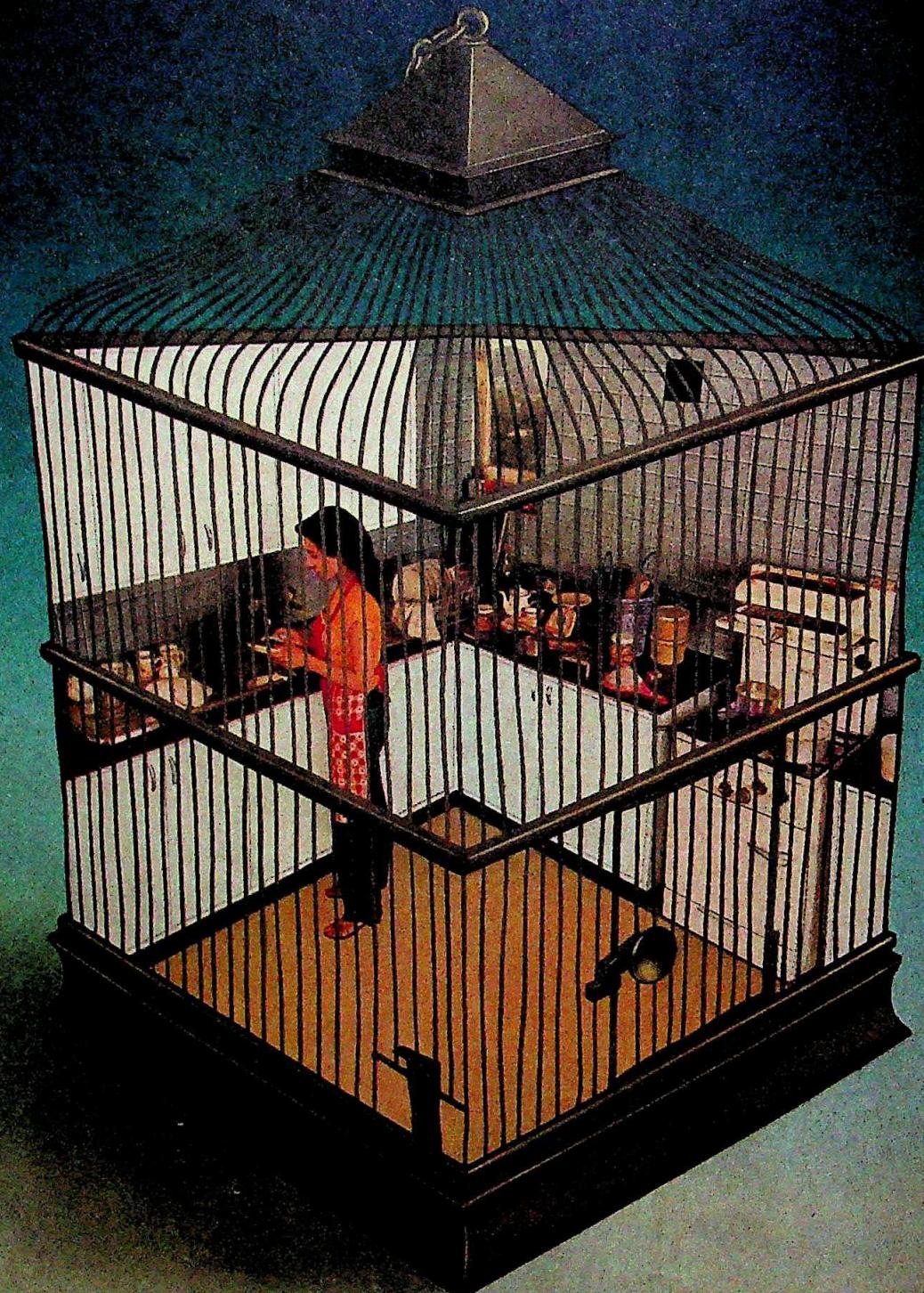
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## HIMACHAL PRADESH Past Sins

**FORMER** Himachal Pradesh chief minister Thakur Ram Lal, now governor of Andhra Pradesh, is being haunted by ghosts from the past. Last fortnight, in a confidential communication

to state Government registrar (Vigila-

nce) the Himachal Pradesh High Court took

objection to the manner

in which a case of alleged

smuggling of timber in a truck

— allegedly owned by Padam

Ram Lal's son-in-law — was hushed up by police officials.

Interestingly, Ram Lal

had to step down from office

as one of the high court's

members in cases involving

close relatives and friends.

The registrar's letter fol-

lowed the high court's scrutiny of

cases settled by lower courts in

the last two years, an annual exercise. The

case in question was handled by D.S.

Minhas, the then superintendent of police (reirement), who was transferred soon

after he directed the police to register timber

smuggling cases against Mast Ram Tanta

and others (INDIA TODAY, February 15).

According to the high court's letter, in October 1981, Minhas intercepted a truck — HPS

— allegedly owned by Padam Singh. He

then directed the then Dhalli station house officer

Padam Singh to register a case against both

forest guard, Chandu Ram, and the truck

owner under the Indian Forest Act (IFA) and

Indian Penal Code (IPC).

**Timber Transported:** In his directive

on October 18, 1981, to the Dhalli police

station, Minhas pointed out that Chandu

had allowed a truck, HPS 4686, to pass

past Dhalli after proper checking and

clearance though the truck was carrying 35

cumbers of timber without any export hammer

or personal property mark and 75 CFT

(market value Rs 1 lakh) was being

transported in the truck without any proper

permits.

Though the case was registered against

Padam Singh, both under IFA and IPC, the

charge sheet prepared by the local police in

the court of the munsiff magistrate was

obviously, filed only under IFA which em-

panded the magistrate to compound the case

by imposing a maximum penalty of Rs

which was actually done in this case.

The forest guard Chandu Ram was not

included as co-accused in the case as

said by Minhas.

The high court has objected to the

manner in which this case was handled by the state prosecutors. Says the letter: "The assistant public prosecutor whose name is Rameshwar Singh Negi made efforts to have the matter decided in an unholy haste without urging all the material facts before the trial magistrate. The investigating officer as well as the assistant public prosecutor for reasons best known to them omitted the name of Chandu Ram, forest guard as co-accused in the case despite the fact that he was named in the *rukka* (report signed by Minhas) and the police had evidence about his complicity in the commission of an unlawful transportation of timber."

### Embarrassment Averted:

State police officials are not talking but the high court has hinted that "this was done evidently under pressure from higher echelons of the Government so as to prevent the guard from divulging other secrets known by him". According to police sources, if Chandu Ram was also charged along with

Padam Singh then criminal proceedings against both of them would have had to be launched—and that would have hit the headlines. Therefore, the police handled the case as a 'sensitive' one. Concluded the high court communication: "It appears that everyone concerned in the investigation and prosecution of the case tried to ensure that the matter was hushed up with a nominal sentence or fine."

The state Vigilance Department has now started investigations against all officials named by the court. Padam Singh can't be convicted twice for the same offence but interrogation of the forest guards and junior policemen is likely to bring out enough interesting details. The ghost of Ram Lal's past has not been laid yet. — PRABHU CHAWLA

## KARNATAKA

# Civic Success

THE MONSOON clouds hovering over Karnataka have done nothing to dampen the spirits of the ruling Janata Party. Last fortnight the party led by Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde registered a convincing victory in the civic elections. It took absolute control of 45

of the 166 town municipalities for which elections were held and got a landslide victory in the prestigious Bangalore City Corporation. Capturing a total of 36 per cent of the votes, the party emerged on top in the civic polls while the Congress(I) was relegated to a poor third with independent candidates

emerging as a second major force. Crowded Hegde: "The people have reposed great confidence in us. No other government has in the six-month period of its office fulfilled so many promises as the Janata Government has done."

But while party members can congratulate themselves for the electoral victory, they certainly cannot rest on their laurels. Independent candidates, who captured a large share of the municipalities, have emerged as a key force at the local level. The independents have taken a firm grip in as many as 32 towns and won an estimated 25 per cent of the seats. With the shadow of the independents growing uncomfortably large, the Janata Party is making frantic efforts to woo them.

**Independent Clout:** Hegde claimed that with their help his party had secured 80 per cent of the municipalities. But his boast has yet to be substantiated and the true picture will emerge only when the elections for the presidents of these municipalities are held. Meanwhile party President D. Manjunath has thrown the doors wide open for independents to walk in.

The Congress(I) has good reason to be glum about the poll results. The only silver lining was the fact that it had captured at

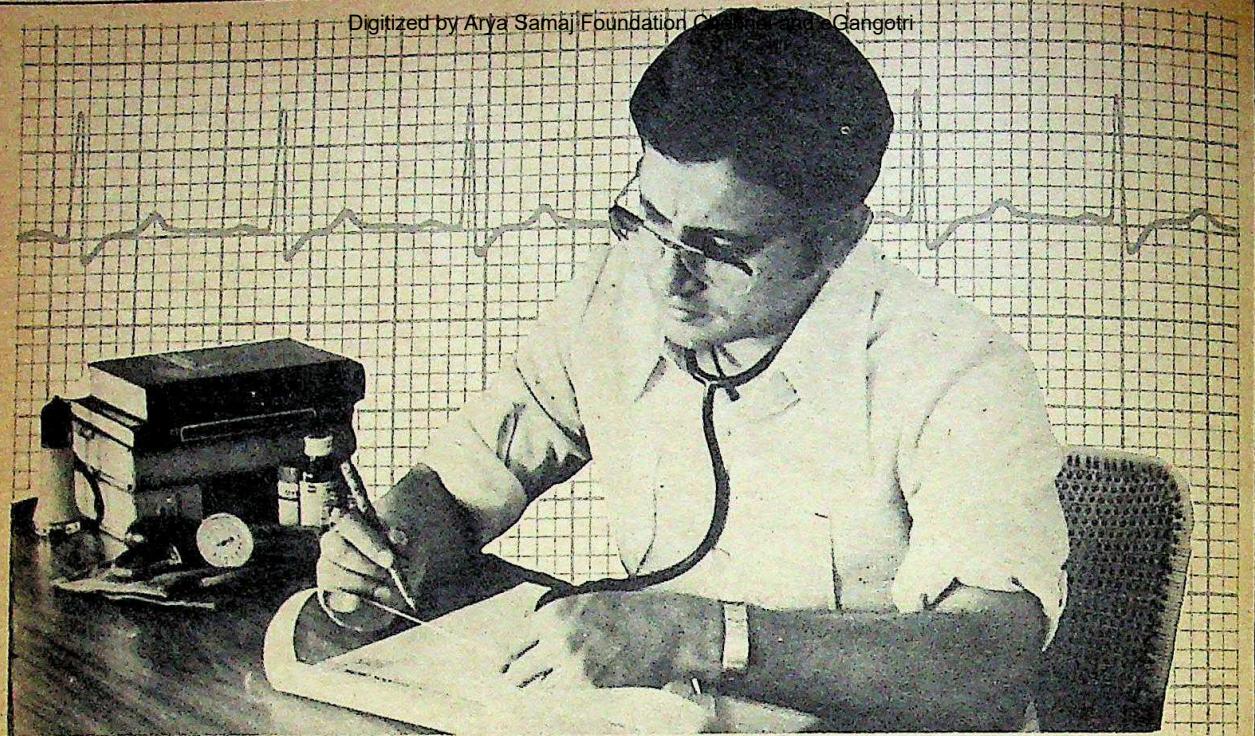


Hegde (left) and Patil: clear message

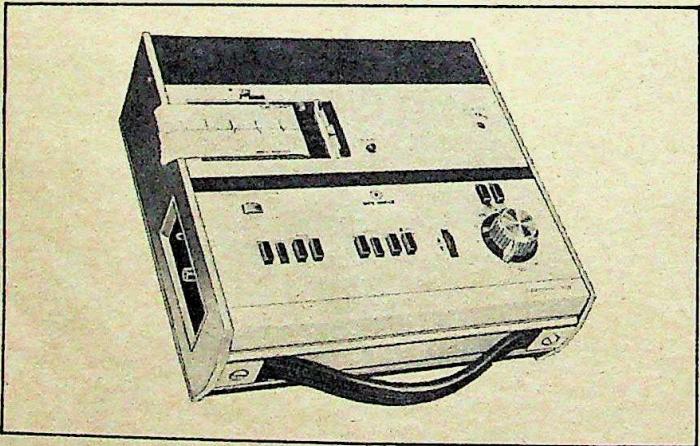
least 26 towns and taken an estimated 30 per cent of the seats. The message was clear: the people were unwilling to vote the party back to power at least until the Janata Party had a chance to prove itself. Admitted newly appointed state party President K.H. Patil: "Spirited workmanship is still not there in our party. Our house is not ready yet."

Patil is now concentrating on uniting the feuding factions and giving a semblance of organisational structure to the party. He plans to reconstitute the 22 district Congress committees and also appoint new members to the 256 block Congress committees. Said Patil: "So far the problem is that we only had members who thought of today. Now we need people who will have to think of tomorrow."

**Poor Results:** But for S. Bangarappa's Karnataka Kranti Ranga there seems to be no tomorrow. His party fared so badly in the



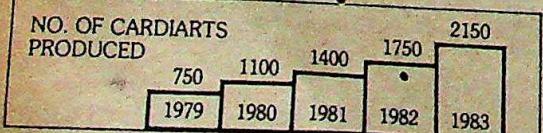
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polls that in the Bangalore corporation 35 candidates were trounced. While Gurappa has been forced to go into hibernation, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is crippled by infighting. The ejection of Jerry A.K. Subbiah, former party president seems to have taken its toll.

Having failed to form an electoral alliance with the Janata Party, which it supports in the state Assembly, its performance in civic polls has done little to prop up its political fortunes in the state. It now holds 6 per cent of municipal seats in the state, in the Bangalore corporation was swamped by the Janata Party winning only four of 36 seats.

Bolstered by its success at the hustings, six-month-old Government which has been under pressure from various lobbies in state, has put its foot down. When the sugar farmers turned recalcitrant and invaded the Vidhana Soudha, the seat of Government, last fortnight, Hegde had arrested and ignored their vituperative charges. The chief minister is making the most of the civic poll results.

—RAJ CHENGAPPA

KARNATAKA

## Drowsy Mystery

**DROWSY** Pavagada Taluk, 150 km from Bangalore, has for long remained in oblivion. But in the past three months it has been in the focus of public notice with the gruesome death of five girls. While the police are still in search of the mysterious killer, the hot topic in coffee houses is whether these were callous killings or the work of a man-eating hyena. A harassed D.N. Munniappa, superintendent of police, Tumkur district, of which Pavagada is a part, said: "We are still searching for the elusive killer and we want to know the truth."

With the district police unable to come up with clear answers the Corps of Detectives (COD), the state's crack team of sleuths, was called in to investigate. Even while the COD was prowling around last fortnight, hardly 3 km from Pavagada town, three-year-old Venkatsubba, daughter of Venkatramanappa, a farm labourer, was brutally killed, leaving the police scratching their heads about the identity of the murderer. All that was left of Venkatsubba was her skull, shreds of her intestines and her frock found hardly half a furlong from her house where she was snatched early one morning while asleep with her parents and two brothers.

**Doubtful Identity:** Sanjeevamma, her mother, remembers that it was around 1 a.m. that she got up when she heard Venkatsubba cry. When she groped around on the bamboo mat to search for her daughter, the child was missing. A hue and cry was raised, but the villagers could not find Venkatsubba till early next morning, when they came across her remains on a groundnut field nearby. The police were called and the dog squad was pressed into service. The trail led to an abandoned cave in a steep rocky hillock, but no evidence of the killer could be traced. Only a few pug marks were found.

Coming two months after the fourth girl was killed in Pavagada, Venkatsubba's murder has raised doubts about the initial theory of the police that it was a man-eating hyena that was responsible for the deaths. While the district police are convinced that the pug marks found near the body indicate that the killer was an animal, the Forest Department does not agree. Forest officials base their suspicions on the fact that a hyena would not usually leave the skull of its victim behind as it is a bone eater and relishes brain matter. Moreover, they argue that the hyena is basically a cowardly animal and does not normally enter a human habitation.

**Young Victims:** In fact, a shoot-at-sight order on hyenas has been imposed in Pavagada ever since the first killing occurred on April 29 when five-year-old Papamma Samuniyappa was snatched by a "big dog-like animal" after sunset in Dasrammanahalli, 15 km north of Pavagada town. Papamma, who was the only child of Anjanamama, was playing when her mother saw her being snatched by a furry animal which vanished into the darkness. Later they found parts of her intestines, two ribs, a few strands of hair and her ribbon, about two furlongs from the house. The police felt that the descriptions of the animal tallied with that of a hyena or a wolf and the Forest Department was asked to carry out a search for the animal.

At that time it seemed plausible that the killer could be a man-eating hyena because Pavagada taluk, with its rocky hillocks and large expanse of plains is a natural habitat of the black and white striped hyena. Forest officials estimate that here are at least 20 hyenas roaming in the taluk. The hyena, a nocturnal animal, is basically a scavenger or more precisely a carrion eater that feeds on the left-overs of kills of larger animals like wolves and panthers.

**Unheeded Warning:** Despite the police and Forest Department officers' warning the people to sleep indoors, they paid little heed to the advice. Within 10 days, about 6 km away from the first killing in a tiny hamlet called Bhoopur, 25-year-old Yellamma was attacked by a "big dog", when she prevented it from snatching her three-year-old daughter Venkatalakshamma. The gash on her neck, which is healing, is indicative of the animal's fury. Hardly an hour later in Bommagannahalli, which is 2 km from Bhoopur, the killer struck again, this time snatching away nine-month-old Srimathi who was sleeping with her mother Nagalakshamma. When her grandfather Giriyappa, 54, went in search of her, he confronted a "striped animal looking like a donkey" about a kilometre away which vanished into the forests.

Within a week on May 15, the killer struck again—this time lifting two-year-old Nagamani while she was sleeping with her parents at around 11 p.m. in Kanenehalli, 5 km from Pavagada town. Her mother Payakka, 22, said she felt some animal trampling her legs before it took away her child, but it was too dark to see it clearly. Nagamani's bangles, the jasmine flowers she was wearing and a severed right leg were found the next day about half a kilometre away from her house. While fear gripped the taluk, the mysterious killer struck again within eight days. This time it was bolder—it walked into Bovi Colony in



Venkatsubba's skull (left) and the dead hyena: gruesome killings

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Pavagada town and at 1 A.M. killed three-year old Adilakshmi while she was sleeping.

**No Respite:** These killings convinced the police that it was a hyena, and a massive hunt for the animal was launched. Private shikaris were called to take a shot at the animal and within a week two hyenas were hounded and killed. These killings were widely publicised and the police and the people heaved a sigh of relief. But two months later, the mysterious killer struck again, killing Venkatsubamma, and the terror began again.

The taluk is agog with the speculation that these killings might be a series of ritualistic sacrifices by a tantrik. Their fears are fuelled by the fact that all the victims were girls below the age of five and the only daughters of their parents. They are puzzled over the fact that in not one of the cases a male child was lifted. The theory of tantrik killing is gaining strength in the taluk, although the dates of the deaths do not tally with the appearance of the full moon or the new moon which is the auspicious day for such primitive rituals as human sacrifices. Nor does it seem plausible that a tantrik would make bold to snatch children sleeping with their families at night, when he could easily lift them during the day without so much risk. Also, the versions given by the parents of the victims seem to indicate the work of a man-eating animal, whether hyena or wolf.

But the killer, man or animal, has proved to be elusive, and a worried Circle Inspector H.C. Srikantiah, who is in charge of the investigation, said: "We have been searching day and night for the killer but it seems to be playing hide and seek with us. It's almost like guerrilla warfare. We don't know who the attacker is."

—RAJ CHENGAPPA in Pavagada

GOA

## Party Squabbles

FOR THE ruling Congress(I) in Goa, infighting is almost a way of life. For several months now, Chief Minister Pratap Singh Rane has been duelling with his Health and Tourism Minister Wilfred D'Souza. Until now, the squabble has not really alarmed the party high command—AICC(I) General Secretary G.K. Moopanar even noted that Goa was "too tiny to be of any significance politically"—but with the Commonwealth retreat due in another three months the party leadership appears to be taking a closer look at the imbroglio.

The problems, however, are not likely

to find an early or quick solution. Last fortnight, D'Souza returned from Delhi where he had gone to apprise the high command of the situation in Goa. In the meantime, 14 party MLA's signed a memorandum calling for D'Souza's removal as minister. Observed Education Minister Harish Zantye, one of those calling for D'Souza's ouster: "If one person refuses to work unitedly with the rest

chided his police officers for arresting a large number of Solanki's supporters after a riot in Diu in which two people died and scores were beaten up. The violence was directed against Solanki's rival, former speaker Narayan Fugro. The earlier Goa IGP left his position after 10 months reportedly because of political interference.

Whether the Congress(I) high command will give the green signal for D'Souza's removal is uncertain since he has already acquired the halo of a martyr among the Catholic community following his removal in December 1981 as president of the party. D'Souza, in fact, traces the present trouble to that time. Rane, a lack-lustre non-controversial candidate, was made chief minister in 1981 after the Congress(I)'s overwhelming victory over the Maharashtraadi Gomantak Party (MGP), mainly as

compromise between D'Souza and Industry Minister A.N. Naik. The winning party was actually the Congress(U) which overnight became the Congress(I).

**Opposition Moves:** But the Congress(I) is well aware that if a fresh election is called it might not be so lucky. Former chief minister Shashikala Kakodkar, who joined the Congress(I) in 1980 after her defeat—she didn't get elected then—is now an independent and hopes to rejoin the MGP shortly. But MGP General Secretary R. Khallap appears to be taking his own time taking her back after first urging her a year ago to leave the Congress(I). Explains Khallap: "The modalities of the entry have to be worked out. I am sorry to say that earlier in our party the democratic procedure was not being followed properly." He has called a party convention at the beginning of September for Kakodkar's re-entry.

Kakodkar cannot conceal her annoyance at Khallap's methods and what she fears are his attempts to pack the convention. After lying low since her defeat Kakodkar has of late become active and party workers and the public seem to be responding well. She notes that although the Congress(I) won many more seats in the 1980 election the difference in popular vote was only 6 per cent. Says the former chief minister: "At the moment there is chaos in the administration. Nobody takes decisions. People now remember my father Dayanand Bandodkar's government and my time nostalgically." Clearly though she may have only three MLA's with her in the present Assembly, Kakodkar is bidding her time.

—COOMI KAPOOR in Panaji



Rane (left) and D'Souza: personality clash

of us he should be removed." But Rane is in no position to remove his acknowledged rival without clearance from Delhi. "Our party headquarters is in Delhi. These matters cannot be decided here," he admitted.

**Session Ploy:** The campaign for D'Souza's ouster is a sequel to the health minister's own plan to unseat Rane. D'Souza's eight MLA supporters embarrassed Rane during last month's assembly session by pointedly not attending the session even when they were on the premises. D'Souza obviously wanted to drive home the point that he was in a position to bring down the Government with the support of his eight MLA's, Speaker Froilano Machado, five opposition MLA's and the two MLA's from Daman and Diu who have traditionally supported whoever is on the winning side in the 30-seat Assembly.

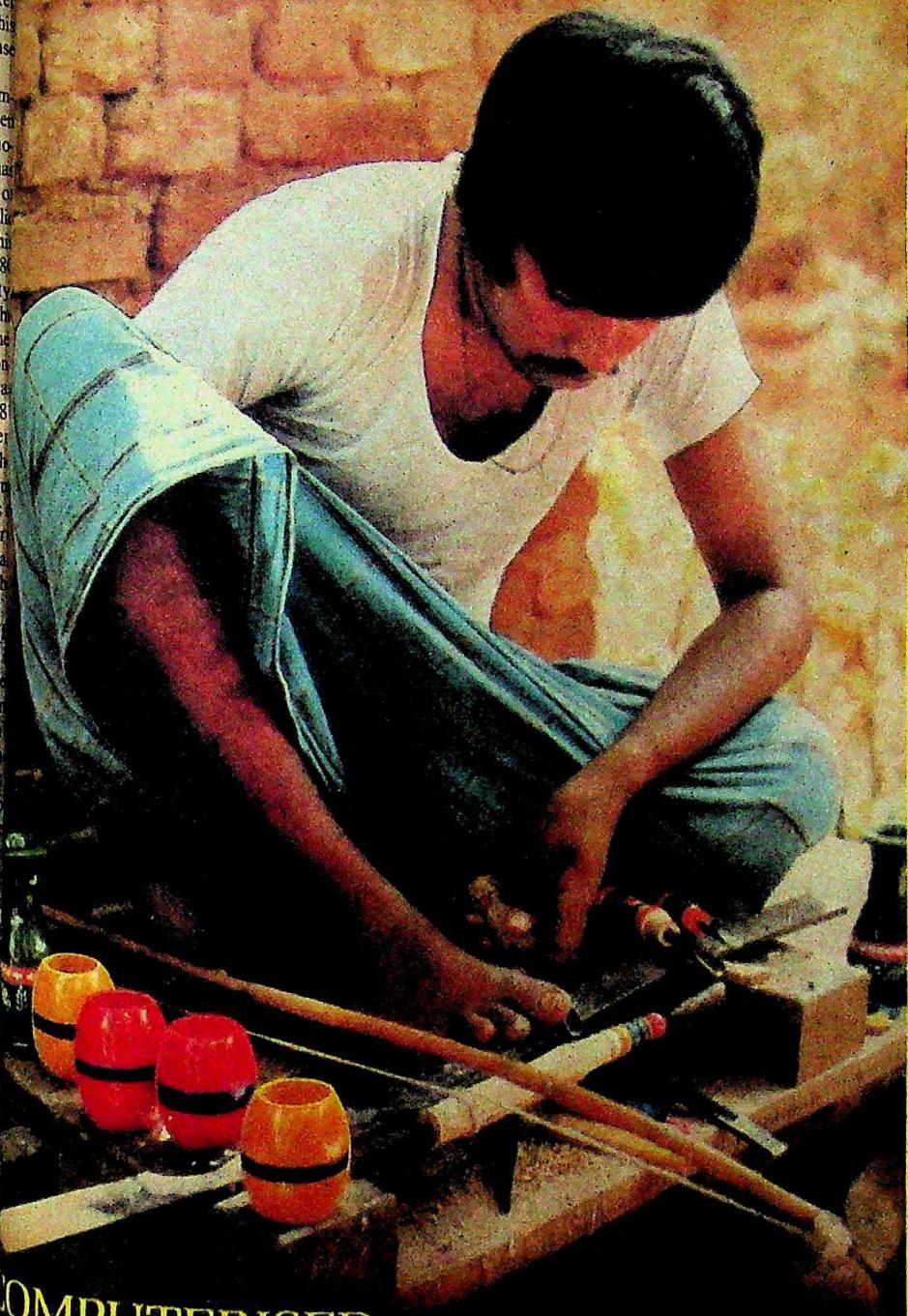
But the threat that the Government would collapse receded and the budget was passed. Rane observed: "The Constitution does not require my calling the Assembly again for another six months by which time CHOGM will be over." D'Souza feels this is not accurate; says he: "The governor is obliged to summon the Assembly at any time if he is convinced that the chief minister has lost his majority," adding hastily that "this, of course, is a hypothetical question".

**Annoyed Police:** In ensuring that the Diu legislator S.B. Solanki remains loyal to him Rane has unfortunately alienated both the Inspector General of Police Rajendra Mohan and his SP S.K. Kain. Both police officers have put in requests for 120 days leave at this critical juncture when CHOGM preparations are on. The chief minister

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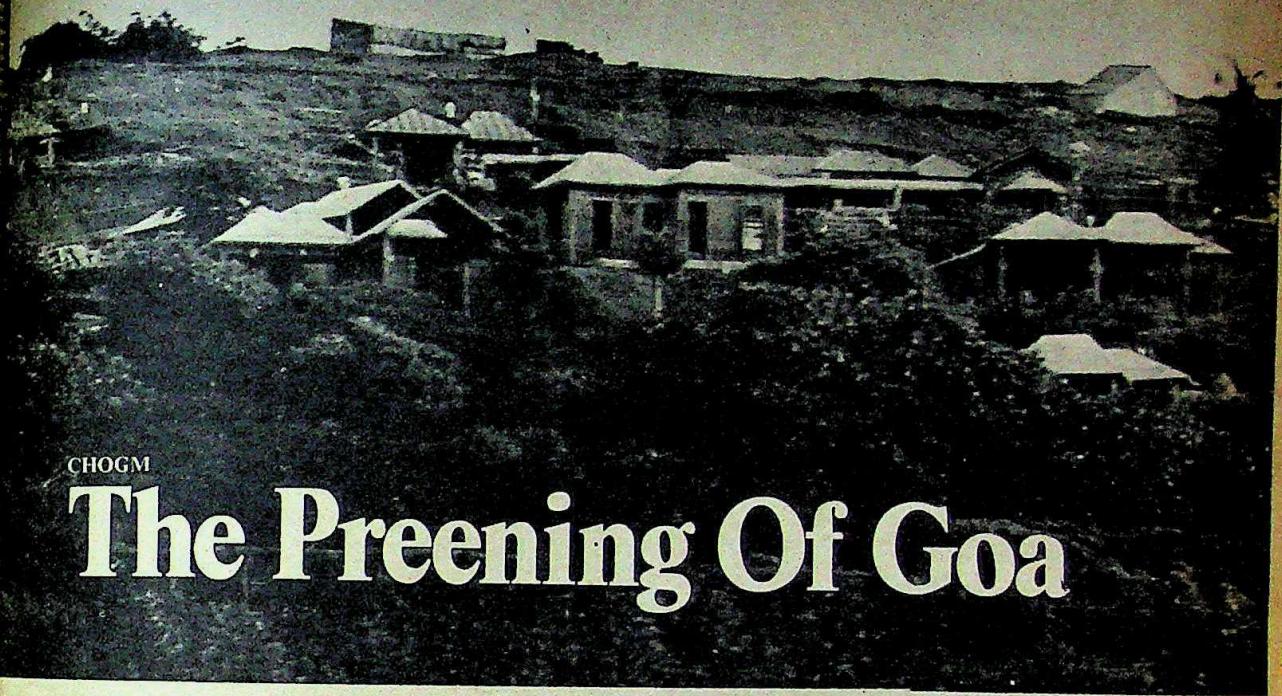


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CHOGM

# The Preening Of Goa

**IN TRANQUIL**, unhurried Goa, the customary siesta time between 1 p.m. and 4 p.m. is being dispensed with. 'Amanha' (tomorrow) used to be the standard Goan plea putting off any task and tomorrow never to come. 'Amanha' is no longer accepted. Hordes of officials, technicians and hordes from Delhi, Maharashtra and Lakka keep flying in to ensure that everything is ready when 46 Commonwealth heads of government arrive in number for a 48-hour retreat in this coastal Union territory (population: 1.5 million) during the Commonwealth of Government Meeting (CHOGM). No expense or trouble is being spared to ensure that the VIPs who come to the balmy climate and breathtakingly beautiful coconut-fringed beaches and picturesque Portuguese-style towns will have a holiday to remember. All expenses are totted up it will surely be a million-dollar vacation. Government sources insist that it will be worth it both in terms of international prestige and publicity for Goa. The expenses are to be borne by the Central Government and a standard maxim the rounds in Goa is: "Don't let opportunity slip, Indira Gandhi denied us anything just now."

**Improvement:** So whether it is sprucing up a dilapidated milk booth, a road or putting more street

## Construction at the Aguada Hermitage

lights, hundreds of requests are pouring in in the name of beautification. Contracts and sub-contracts have been handed out liberally. The only stipulation seems to be that the work has to be in a locality which is close to the visitors' itinerary. Just how

CHOGM has hastened up things is illustrated by the completion this year of the 800 m Zuari bridge on the airport road: work on the bridge had been hanging fire since 1973.

Of the expenses, Rs 8 crore to Rs 9 crore is to be borne by the Goa Government but Chief Minister Pratap Singh Rane is quick to point out that these are costs for such projects as road widening, jetty building and street lighting which would have been taken up in due course. "It is just a case of accelerating the development process," says he. Similarly, Sushil Prakash, Goa's divisional engineer, telecommunications, points out that the Rs 21 crore being spent on increasing the capacity of the local exchanges is a long-term investment. But some of the other telecommunications inputs will have no further use for the Goans once the beach party is over.

Even the exclusive Taj beach resort at Fort Aguada, where the CHOGM delegates are being put up, does not want to later rent the 400-line PABX exchange which is being imported for CHOGM. Entirely computer-controlled, it will offer—temporarily—direct dialling to 60 countries in addition to 20 hot lines abroad. The cost of the exchange is Rs 23 lakh, the laying of the UHF link Rs 25 lakh, the cost of the temporary air-conditioned structure which has to be put up to house the equipment Rs 10 lakh.

**Strong Links:** To ensure that there is no communications breakdown strong



Repainting an idol of St Francis Xavier: sprucing up

## DISPUTES

# Tight Squeeze

**T**HE SPECTACLE of two elderly widows battling the combined might of the Government and a powerful hotel chain would evoke sympathy at any time. But the resistance put up by Josephine Lobo, 73, and Pricosa Menezes, 75, against the take-over of their coconut groves located strategically between the two Taj Hotel complexes in Goa—the Fort Aguada Beach Resort and the neighbouring Taj Holiday Village—has developed into one of the uglier side-shows of the CHOGM preparations.

The widows are convinced that CHOGM is merely a pretext for the Indian Hotels Company Limited, better known as the Taj Hotel group, to swallow up their land holdings. Says Dominique Lobo, Josephine's daughter: "Since 1976 the Taj had been pressing my late father to sell. But we don't want to sell. This land was given to my Mummy by my granny as her dowry. My Mummy spent three years levelling the ground with her bare hands. She planted each coconut tree and they are like her children." Dominique's father, who worked as an accountant in the post office at Aden, regularly sent home his salary for developing the land. Pricosa Menezes is equally adamant: "I will not sell the land as long as I live. After my death my children can do whatever they want."

**Crucial Letter:** For its part, the Taj Hotel group protests that the land is being acquired by the Government for CHOGM and it does not come into the picture. This, however, might have been more convincing if it had not been for a letter written to Pricosa Menezes in 1976 by the then manager of the Taj, I.A. Menezes. In his letter Menezes stated that his company needed the land to expand the Beach Resort Hotel and was offering a price of Rs 10 per sq m (the present unofficial price is said to be Rs 200). The last paragraph is significant: "Looking forward for an early reply to save us from resorting to acquisition of the land under the Land Acquisition Act and thanking you in anticipation."

The widows first received land acquisition notices in March this year calling for the take-over of their entire holdings measuring 21,000 sq m, including Pricosa Menezes's cottage. In tears they went to the Candolim village sarpanch Mazinho Cardozo for help. Cardozo who took up the matter on their behalf began asking some embarrassing questions about why the land was being acquired.

At the time the authorities said that it was wanted for a sports complex for volleyball, table tennis and cards but Cardozo pointed out that the Taj had enough land to build three sports complexes. And while Chief Minister P.S. Rane first insisted that nothing could be done, he later reduced the area to be acquired to 6,600 sq m after a blaze of adverse publicity.

**Purpose Unclear:** Even now nobody is quite clear what the land will be used for. Some officials hint that it is wanted for security reasons. Rane believes that the External Affairs Ministry is keen on developing a putting-green, though he

does not explain how an uneven, sandy coconut grove can be converted into one, in such a short time. He has also offered to give the land back after CHOGM but refuses to give a written assurance on this saying: "In Goa a gentleman's word is enough."

Tourism Minister Wilfred D'Souza, however, is under the impression that his ministry is acquiring the land to build cabanas and dressing-rooms. And after Rane's statement that the land would be returned, D'Souza says that his ministry will not start construction.

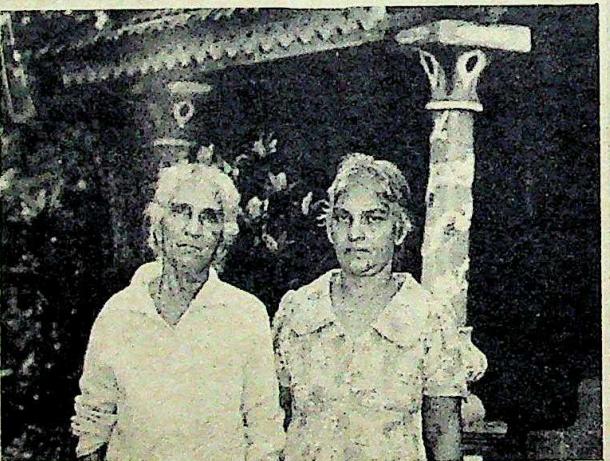
Meanwhile, relations between the villagers and the hotel have deteriorated to an all-time low. Both Lobo and Pricosa Menezes complain that Taj employees regularly trespass and dump rainwater and garbage on their plots. The village sarpanch also says that he will not sanction a sports complex unless there is a public approach to the main road. The panchayat has managed to successfully stall another proposal to acquire 4,20,000 sq m of land for a golf course on Sinquerim Hill. Panchayat officials also feel that the Taj's house tax is too low at Rs 10,000.

Lobo and Menezes are also waging a legal battle against the acquisition. With the help of opposition leaders they have hired a lawyer and filed a petition claiming that the land was not wanted for public purpose. So far they have not met with much success. The plea was rejected by the Goa bench of the Bombay High Court. Now they plan to appeal to the Supreme Court.

Jagat Verma, director operations, western region, of the Indian Hotels Company Limited feels: "We are being unnecessarily defamed. The matter is between the Government and the widows. We do not come into the picture." Adds Asha Rishi, general manager of the Fort Aguada hotel: "In the Government's master plan the coconut groves land is all classified for hotel use. The UNDP plan also shows this. What was desirable before under the master plan became critical because of CHOGM." But for all their protestations there is little doubt the Taj Hotels group has landed itself a fight that it did not bargain for.

—COOMI KAPOOR

SUNIL NAIK



Mrs Lobo with her daughter, Dominique and (below) Mrs Menezes: determined struggle

SUNIL NAIK



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KAPOOR

porting communication links are being established with key departments. Hot lines in the air terminal at Dabolim to various government control rooms, defence quarters in Delhi and Bombay, the press and the press will cost an additional Rs 1.8 crore.

Ironically, although Goa will offer local tele-dialling to 60 countries, local telephone communications are in a mess. A new exchange was installed in April this year in Panaji but no air-conditioning was provided for the equipment. Underground cables which were newly laid were severely damaged with all the digging activity taken up by various agencies, a malady which affected Delhi during the preparations for the Asiad.

Says Prakash: "Earlier no one used to bother to inform us of digging; now there is much better coordination between the municipality, the Public Works Department, and electricity and telephone departments." The *Navhind Times* daily, in commented wistfully on the state of its telephones, saying that while it might be possible to get London direct, it was longer possible to dial from one number Panaji to another, let alone Panaji to co.

THE 40-ACRE Fort Aguada beach resort, which stretches from atop the Sinquerim Hill to the Calangute, is considered an ideal locale for private informal discussions between leaders. A high wall is being erected around the premises to keep away both press and intruders. Aguada was personally selected last summer by the prime minister over such competition as Chandigarh, Bangalore and after she flew down in a helicopter to see the premises accompanied by the group's Managing Director Ajit Kerkar. The main hotel complex, a Portuguese-mansion done up in red laterite stone is renovated so that the heads of state get a suite which includes a bedroom and a sitting-room. In the Aguada's exotic garden 20 new cottages are being built the Aguada Hermitage.

The suites for the VIPs are being furnished with antique Goan carved furniture of wood and sisam. Each suite has a separate colour scheme. Wooden rafters on the and terracotta pots will all add to the touch. Strategically located on top of the hill are three cottages which stand out because of their commanding position. Representatives of various high commissions in

Delhi, who have come down to Goa to look up the arrangements, invariably ask who is to be located where, to which the hotel's standard diplomatic reply is that the Ministry of External Affairs will decide. After CHOGM the hotel plans to rent the cottages for Rs 2,000 a night. While the main guests, their wives and their aides will be housed at Fort Aguada, the CHOGM secretariat staff

of Goa's dangerously narrow streets is a major priority. Says Shaikh Hassan, minister for power, revenue and energy: "Goa will be lit up like a Christmas tree for our visitors." Bright sodium and high-pressure mercury lamps are being installed all along the road from Panaji to Fort Aguada, the main promenades of Panaji and the causeway from Panaji to Raibander along the Mandovi river. The churches of old Goa and the national monuments are being floodlit as well as the ramparts of Fort Aguada which presently houses Goa's jail. The cost of the new lighting arrangements is estimated at Rs 1.70 crore.

The VIP visitors arrive at Dabolim Airport on November 25 and the present naval airfield is in for extensive renovation. The shabby shed which acts as the terminus is to be replaced with a Rs 2-crore two-storey building in Jaisalmer and Kota stone with typical Goan wooden rafters for the roofs and air-conditioning. There are

to be three large VIP lounges and Air-India will be doing the decor but, notes V.S. Mulekar, Goa's aerodrome officer: "Air-India will be taking away their fancy furniture afterwards. We cannot afford to keep it thereafter."

**Extensive Arrangements:** The Instrument Landing System and Visual Approach Slope Indicator are other new installations. Six helipads at Rs 2 lakh each are being built so that the visitors can be airlifted to Fort Aguada lighthouse where helipads are also being constructed. A stand-by arrangement is to go by boat from the Goa Shipyard jetty to Fort Aguada or by road. Jetties are being constructed at old Goa and Aguada and a luxury launch (cost Rs 25 lakh) is being added to the existing fleet of two.

One point which is irking the Goans is the way all decisions are being worked out in Delhi and by officials who keep flying in and out. A common refrain is that the chief minister and ministers hardly know what is happening and are merely told what to do. Most of the visiting technicians and engineers are outsiders, not because Goans have not taken up these professions but because those who do have preferred to leave Goa and earn a living by taking up lucrative jobs in Bombay and the Middle East. But the engineers and technicians are just a small advance party. As CHOGM draws near thousands of bureaucrats, policemen and soldiers will descend on Goa to make sure it's a carnival fit for a queen.

-- COOMI KAPOOR in Panaji

SUNIL NAIK



A newly-built VIP suite at the Aguada Hermitage: fit for kings

will be housed next door at the Taj Holiday Village in a slightly less opulent environment.

**Leisure Pursuits:** With the shortage of time it is doubtful whether the much-talked-of putting green will be completed but apart from golf almost every other game will be available, including water-skiing, windsurfing, para-sailing, sailing, rowing, fishing, squash and billiards. In honour of CHOGM, the Taj is building a sports complex for tennis and volleyball and a health club. The hotel is stocking its deep freezers with exotica such as smoked oysters, pink salmon, caviare, T-boned steaks and baby corns, its cellars with fine imported wines, though the Ministry of External Affairs has drawn the line at the import of vintage-year wines as an unnecessary extravagance.

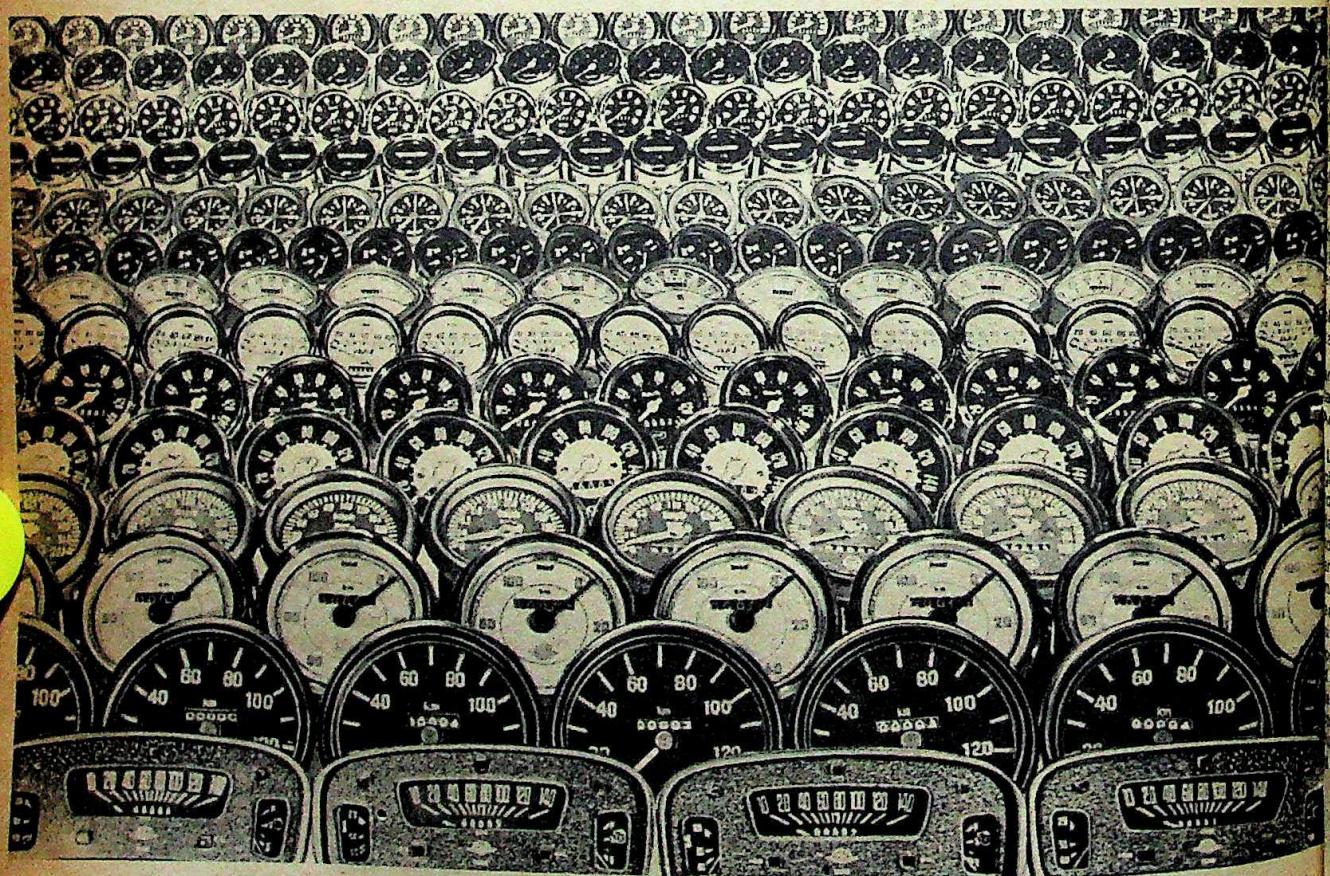
The only major excursion planned for the heads of state is a river cruise to old Goa, the site of the former capital where some of the most renowned churches and convents of Goa are situated. Workers are busy with brushes giving a spring cleaning to the church of St Francis of Assisi across the road. A new floor to the museum building is being added. An embarrassing problem for the Government is what to do with the statue of the 16th century Portuguese soldier-poet Luis De Camoes, which the Portuguese erected a year before their exit from Goa in December 1961 and placed prominently right in the centre of the main square of old Goa. A major controversy in Goa is whether the statue should remain.

Meanwhile, the lighting and widening

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These collectively led to a major turning point. NK founded IIL, the first automotive instrumentation company in India, in collaboration with VDO. A warm association that bore much fruit. Over the years VDO has been instrumental in setting standards, moulding and guiding International Instruments to a premier position in the world of instrumentation. Inspired by NK's courage, determination and spirit of adventure, the company has made rapid strides towards world-wide recognition and acclaim—the brand name YENKAY is now synonymous with quality and reliability, the world over.

Landmarks in the pursuit of progress.

- 1958 IIL incorporated with VDO collaboration.
- 1962 Modern factory established at Hosur Road, Bangalore.
- 1964 OE acceptance of all major manufacturers.
- 1967 First exports—shipments as OE to Europe.
- 1969 Full-fledged R&D Centre established.
- 1975 Manufacturing facilities for switches and a tool room acquired.
- 1978 Collaboration for manufacture of ticketing machines with Ticket Equipment Limited of the UK.
- 1979 IIL became one among the top ten instrument manufacturers in the world.
- 1980 Factory complex inaugurated at Bommasandra, an industrially backward area near Bangalore.
- 1981 Fresh collaboration with VDO for sophisticated electronic/electrical instruments signed.
- 1982 Collaboration with Kienzle Apparate GmbH, West Germany, for electronic tachographs signed.

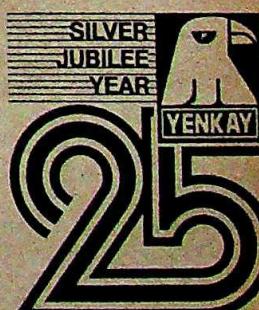
IIL has manufactured to date, over 25 million units. The comprehensive product range covers a wide area of applications for an equally wide range of industries.

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And so today, the spirit of N Krishnan and the ideals he stood for, live on. Future projects to meet the country's demands and international needs are on in full swing. And a shining future beckons IIL to greater and more fulfilling times ahead.



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SAIL 1994

## CENTRE-STATE RELATIONS

# The Unwritten Rules



THE LARGEST experiment ever undertaken in human history in the art of democratic living has been carried on in India since 1950. Never before, and nowhere else, has more than one-seventh of the human race lived together in freedom as a single political entity. The uniqueness of this phenomenon is rendered even more impressive by the fact that till 1950 India was never a united country.

In such a situation it is not only natural but inevitable that differences and disputes should arise between the Centre and the 22 states that constitute the Union, and even between the states *inter se*. The problem must be resolved in a spirit of goodwill and with far-sighted vision.

The Constitution provides for a cooperative federation of states with a bias in favour of the Centre. Such a bias, within reasonable limits, is necessary, having regard to the conditions prevailing in our country. The essential question is—what are the reasonable limits within which the constitutional bias in favour of the Union should be contained?

The approach to the problem of Centre-state relations must be governed by the following basic considerations which aim at reconciliation of conflicting viewpoints:

► A national consensus should clearly remind the Centre that it has not inherited the viceroy's mantle of paramountcy. What is needed at the Centre today is not an authoritarian government but the moral authority to govern. And the Centre would have no moral authority to govern unless it displays a sense of constitutional morality, particularly a sense of justice and fairness towards the states.

► We do need a strong Centre. But strong Centre is in no way inconsistent with strong states. On the contrary, by definition, a strong Union can only be a Union of strong states.

► Where a paramount national interest dictates a line of action, the narrower viewpoint of a state or the parochial attitude of a municipality must not stand in the way.

For instance, the states should be persuaded in the national interest to agree to the substitution of sales tax by additional excise to be levied by the Centre and fairly distributed among the states—thus providing the states with the same growing revenues as they would derive from sales tax after

deducting the cost of collection. Similarly, the states should revoke the power granted by them to their municipalities to levy the antiquated octroi, and resources should be raised for the local bodies in more civilised ways.

► As far as possible, the grievances of the states should be redressed by building up statutory conventions and traditions which are in conformity with the true spirit of the Constitution, rather than by amending the Constitution. There are good reasons why constitutional amendment should be treated as the option of the last resort:

- The Constitution is intended not merely to provide for the exigencies of the moment but to endure through a long lapse of years. In dealing with a constitution, the wisest principle to act upon is

*We do need a strong Centre. But a strong Centre is in no way inconsistent with strong states. On the contrary, by definition, a strong Union can only be a Union of strong states.*

that when it is not necessary to change, it is necessary not to change.

► If the Constitution is worked in the right spirit, there would be no need to consider any amendment so far as Centre-state relations are concerned. Many people hastily assume that the working of the Constitution has revealed its grave shortcomings, whereas the truth of the matter is that it is a noble Constitution which has been worked in an ignoble spirit. The words of Dr Ambedkar in the Constituent Assembly were both prophetic and true: "I feel that the Constitution is workable; it is flexible and it is strong enough to hold the country together both in peace and in war time. If things go wrong under the new Constitution the reason would not be that we had a bad Constitution. What we would have to say is that man was vile."

► Today a crisis of national identity broods over the country. We are in the throes of our re-birth as a single nation. Emotions are running high in Assam, Punjab and some other states, and the still small voice of reason has been silenced. The forces of passion and ignorance

are in the ascendant. At such a juncture, to open the door of constitutional revision may involve a grave danger to the unity and integrity of the country.

## Industries and Economic Development

The basic scheme of the Constitution is that industries and commerce should remain state subjects and should be dealt with primarily by the states; and that it is only those industries, the control of which by the Union is expedient in the public interest, that must be regulated by the Centre.

Parliament passed the Industries (Development and Regulation) Act in 1951, specifying those industries which in the public interest would have to be controlled by the Centre. However, in course of time, more and more industries were added to the Industries (Development and Regulation) Act till the basic constitutional scheme has now been patently subverted.

Without any amendment to the Constitution, "Industries" has been nefariously

transformed into a Union subject and has ceased to be a state subject. Today among the at least 93 per cent of organised industries, in terms of the value of output, have been brought under the bailiwick of the Union. Even items like razor blades, paper, gum, matchsticks, household electrical appliances, cosmetics, soaps and other toilet requisites, fabrics and footwear, pressure-cookers, cutlery, steel furniture, zip fasteners, hurricane lanterns, bicycles, dry cells, TV sets, agricultural implements—have all been brought under the Centre's control. There can be no doubt that this is an indefensible violation of the Constitution.

The true position of the states in commerce and industry, according to the unmistakable mandate of the Constitution, cannot be restored; and for this purpose no amendment of the Constitution is needed. All that is necessary is to delete various items in the First Schedule to the Industries (Development and Regulation) Act.

## President's Rule

Article 356 confers the power on the Centre to impose President's Rule in a case where "the Government of the state cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution".

This power has been grossly abused and President's Rule has been imposed on the states more than 70 times. All states, except Maharashtra and Sikkim, have been given a one time or another doses of this preventitive curative. Several cases where President's Rule has been imposed by the Centre in a partisan spirit for party ends have already passed into history. The Rajamannar Committee in its report published in 1971 recommended deletion of Article 356.

ended deletion of Article 356. It may be better to retain the Article while devising machinery to prevent its misuse.

### Government of Governors

According to the judgement of the Supreme Court delivered on May 4, 1979 in Gagukul Tilak's case, the relationship between employer and employee does not exist between the Government of India and the Governor, and the governor's office "is not subordinate or subservient to the Government of India". While this is the true constitutional position, we have systematically created various constitutional institutions regarding the office of the governor. In practice the governor has been reduced to virtually the same position as that of the resident in a native state in the days of the British Raj. Several governors have debased their high office by lending their services to the partisan objectives of the political parties in power at the Centre.

### Constitutional Authorities

Today among the extra-constitutional authorities, the Planning Commission takes the palm. It is without any constitutional legislative sanction.

The Planning Commission is a political body. The three horizontal layers of administration—represented by the Union, and Concurrent Lists—have vertically partitioned into plan and non-plan sectors; and the

through the Planning Commission holds both the formulation and implementation of the plans even in respect of items within the State List and the Concurrent List. There is justification for the claim by Dr K. Subba Rao that the Planning Commission "functions in violation of provisions of the Constitution".

Today there are two types of grants by the Centre to the states—grants-in-lieu of the revenues of the states as recommended by the Finance Commission (Article 282) and discretionary grants by the Central Government (Article 282) which are usually in accordance with the recommendations of the Planning Commission. Of the grants disbursed by the Centre to the states, only 30 per cent is as per the recommendations of the Finance Commission.

The remaining 70 per cent represents discretionary grants given to the states on the recommendation of the Planning Commission.

To remove this distortion of the constitutional scheme, it is necessary that even discretionary grants under Article 282 should be given by a constitutional authority like the Finance Commission, and not by the

### Financial Relations

Any fair-minded and impartial observer can have no doubt that having regard to the growing responsibilities of the states, the distribution of taxes and revenues is very unfair to the states and far too favourable to the Centre.

Income tax on non-corporate assessee is levied and collected by the Government of India and distributed between the Union and the states. But corporation tax—tax levied on limited companies—is not included in the divisible pool nor the 10 per cent surcharge on income tax which is again retained by the Union for its exclusive benefit.

Union duties of excise may be shared between the Union and the states but only "if Parliament by law so provides" (Article 272). The chairman of the Fourth Finance Commission referred to the possibility of making a constitutional amendment placing excise duties on the same footing as income tax that is, making excise duties also divisible between the Union and the states.

*Any fair-minded and impartial observer can have no doubt that having regard to the growing responsibilities of the states, the distribution of taxes and revenues is very unfair to the states and far too favourable to the Centre.*

The Seventh Finance Commission had recommended that 40 per cent of the central excise duty should be transferred to the states. In the last three years the Centre stopped raising rates of excise on items like petroleum, iron and steel, aluminium and coal, but only raised the prices. The entire benefit of this increase in prices goes to the Centre which is the producer and seller of the goods.

According to a recent speech of the West Bengal finance minister, by raising prices instead of excise the Centre gathered additional revenues of Rs 6,500 crore in which the states are not entitled to a share, whereas, if the excise had been increased, Rs 2,600 crore would have come to the states as per the recommendation of the Seventh Finance Commission.

The states must be given a legal right to a larger share in the tax revenues collected by the Centre, instead of having to rely upon the discretionary largesse of the Union under Article 282.

### Inter-State Council

The Constitution of an Inter-state Council as envisaged in Article 263 of the

Constitution is long overdue. Active cooperation among the states should be institutionalised and states must learn to solve their inter-state problems—regarding electricity, water and rivers, for example—by mutual discussion and negotiation without the intervention of the Centre.

The formation of the Council of Chief Ministers which first met on March 20, 1983 in Bangalore, is a significant constitutional development. It is a pity that there should be the need for a union of states—as distinct from the Union of states which the Centre is supposed to be—but then the states are left with no other alternative under the present set-up.

The ways in which the Centre unduly dominates the states are beyond enumeration. Exceptional constitutional powers are used in a routine manner, and standards of constitutional decency are unknown. The latest instance where permission to the Andhra Pradesh chief minister to broadcast from All India Radio was summarily denied, is symptomatic of the Centre's attitude towards its "vassals".

An unfailing index to the maturity of a democracy is the degree of its respect for unwritten conventions. By this criterion, the Indian democracy must be regarded as being still in its swaddling clothes.

### The Only Lasting Solution

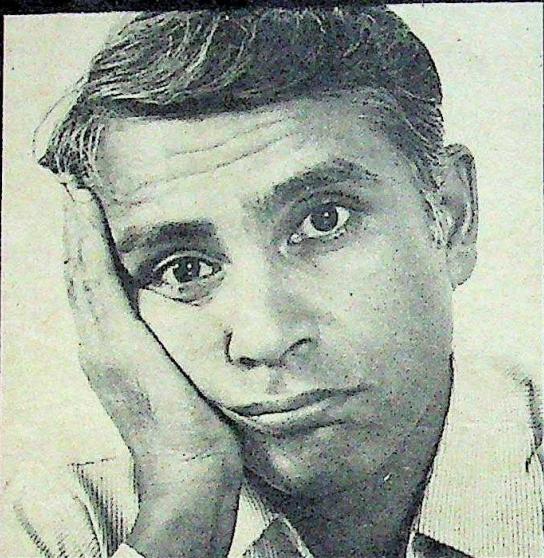
Those who are in favour of major constitutional amendments to redefine relations between the Centre and the states, must come to terms with one profound truth.

The only satisfactory and lasting solution of the vexed problem is to be found not in the statute-book but in the conscience of men in power. The long-suffering states can be given redress not by a change of law but by a change of heart. The ultimate guarantees of a fair deal to the states are the individual consciences of the representatives they return to Parliament and a vigorous and well-informed public opinion.

We must get away from the fallacy of "the legal solubility of all problems". In a constitution what is left unsaid is as important as what is said. Our constitutional equilibrium can be preserved only by obedience to the unenforceable.

The survival of our democracy and the unity and integrity of the nation depend upon the realisation that constitutional morality is no less essential than constitutional legality. Dharma lives in the hearts of public men; when it dies there, no constitution, no law, no amendment, can save it.

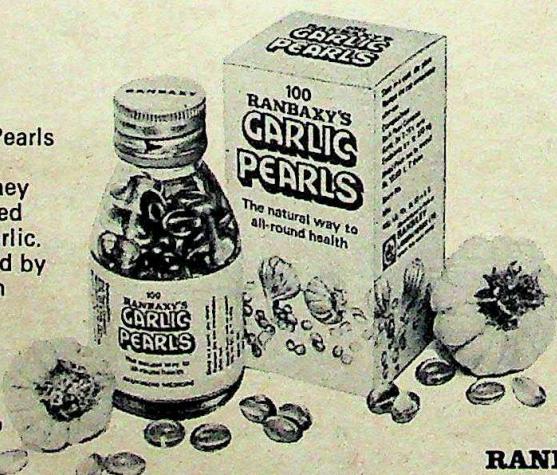
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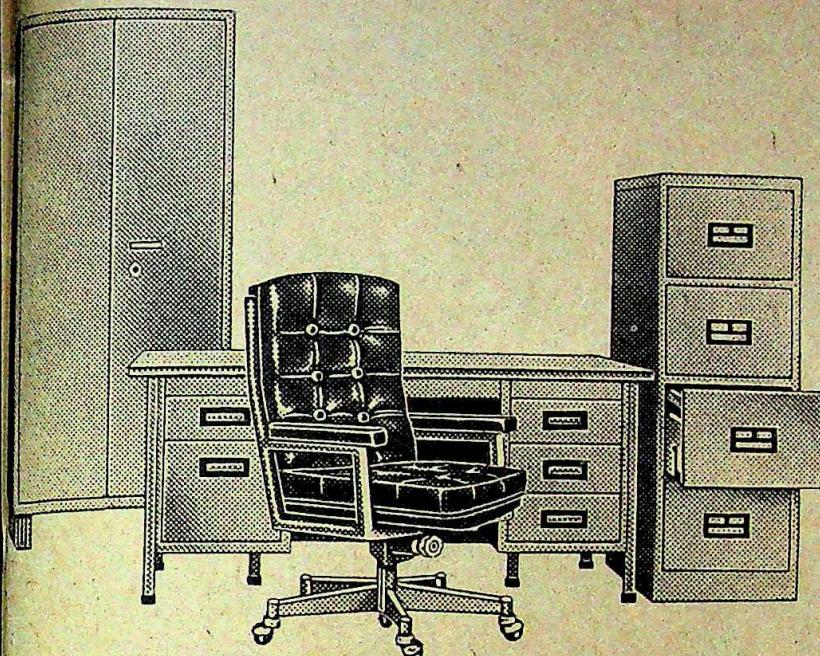


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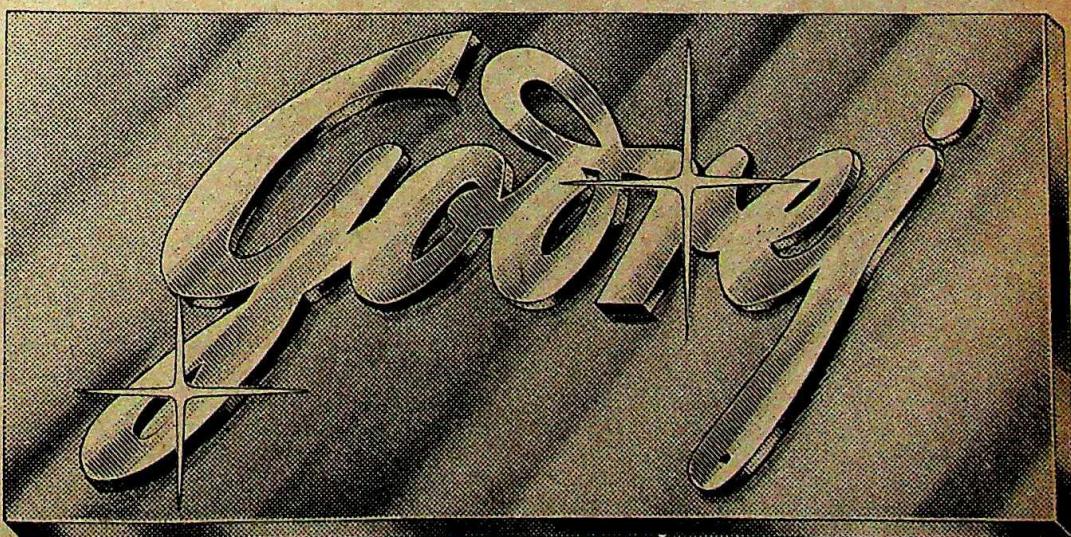
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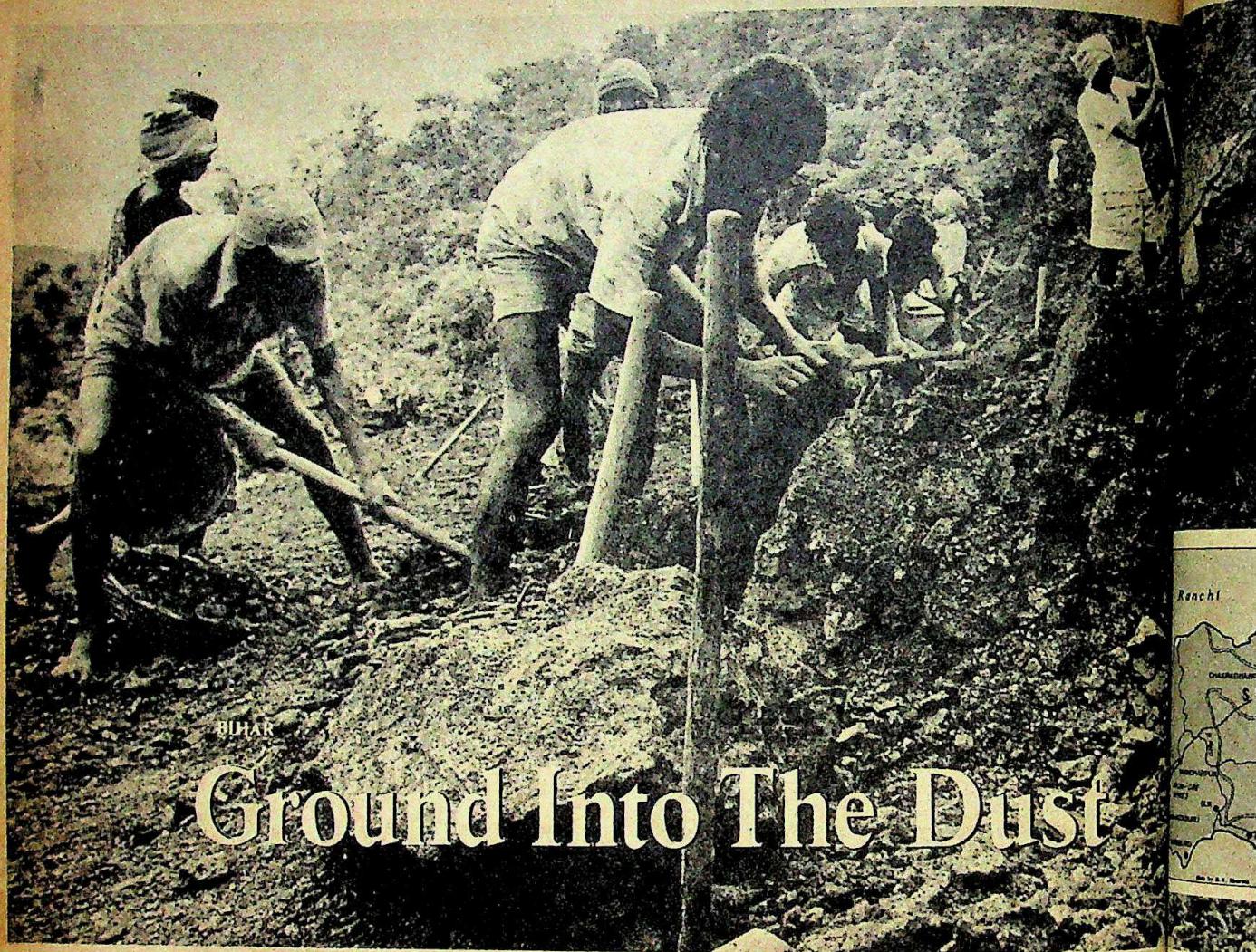
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BIHAR

# Ground Into The Dust

**SINGHBHUM** is a tribal district of Bihar (population: 28,59,260; area: 13,440 sq km) and one of the most backward in the region. For years now, thousands of tribals, unable to live off the lush jungles, have been eking out an existence as workers in the scores of iron ore mines that dot Singhbhum. In recent months, workers have agitated for better working and living conditions and reports have trickled in of bloody clashes with the authorities. To investigate the realities of Singhbhum, Correspondent FARZAND AHMED and Photographer PRAMOD PUSHKARNA spent a few days in the area. Their report:

**J**UNE 1, 1983. The market-place of Gua town. A jeep roars through the crowded market-place, dragging five young men tied to it with ropes. The jeep stops in a cloud of dust, a deputy superintendent of police jumps down, barks an order. The five young men are untied, and hung upside down. In full view of a frightened public, they are beaten up mercilessly

## Singhbhum miners at work

with lathis. Later, the sweat and the dust on their bodies now stained with blood, they are cut down and hustled off to jail. One of them, Bider Nag, later dies of his injuries. In the usual sequel to incidents of this kind, the officer concerned is suspended and an inquiry instituted.

The young men on whom the police officer worked out his anger slightly over two months ago were Adivasis. The beating, reminiscent of the punishment southern landowners of the United States used to mete out to rebellious Negroes, was a sequel to demonstrations by Adivasi youth demanding jobs and better working conditions in the iron ore mines of Singhbhum. Years of blatant and relentless exploitation at the hands of mine officials and contractors had pushed them to the point where they were willing to brave anything to get their message across, even daring to confront a berserk deputy superintendent of police.

**Suppression:** If ever a people can be called the wretched of the earth, it is the Adivasis of Singhbhum, a district whose mining work supplies half of India's iron ore. But here is the human beings who actually delve into the earth to claw at the rock for the precious substance are nothing less than prey to a savage jungle, ruled over by no decadent or sadistic landlord but by organisations supposed to be the free expression of India: the public sector Steel Authority of India (SAIL), whose subsidiaries the Bokaro Steel Plant and the Indian Iron and Steel Ltd (IISCO) are responsible for most of the mines in the area. The Gua, Chiria and Noharpur mines are worked by IISCO, the Riburu and the Megahataburu—this last under construction—mines by Bokaro. There are also some mines under private management, including Noamundi, run by Tata Iron & Steel Co Ltd.

The mines cover an area of about 100 km and employ mostly Adivasis at a rate which is just above the statutory minimum.



## **Women digging for water**

*"We inhale a lot of dust, risk our lives and when we go back we are forced to drink dirty water. We don't know if we are dead or alive."*

—Gua mіnєr

The colonies house over 12,000 people. At Bukkul settlement, one of the miners says that "we live in a condition in which even pigs refuse to live and when we demand something we are dragged, assaulted and involved in false cases". The condition of the workers contrasts with those of the officers with their well-built and properly furnished houses boasting of such luxuries as cool filtered 24-hour water piped from the lake. One

contractor has even had a water pipe laid specially for himself; it passes through the shanty town and woe betide any ill-advised Adivasi who would damage it or try to tap it for water. Mehr does not hesitate to assert that "we are not aware of such conditions prevailing in colonies or any indiscrimination", but he adds that a new Rs-30 lakh scheme will bring water to workers before the next monsoon. The workers, however, shrug and say that this is not the first such scheme they have heard of.

#### **Unhealthy Conditions:** If living condi-

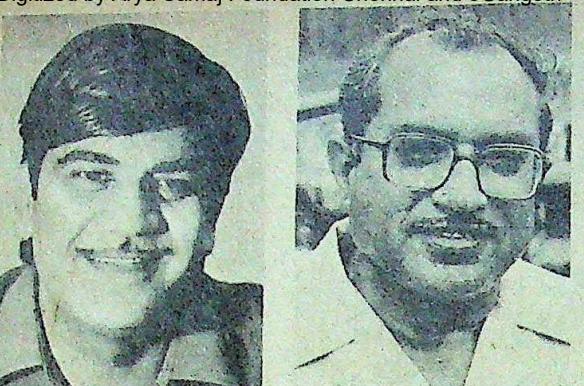
Unhealthy Conditions. If living conditions put a sty to shame, working conditions are scandalous—for the miners: no boots, no helmets, not even a mask, compulsory under miners safety rules. "We inhale a lot of dust, risk our lives and when we go back we are forced to drink dirty water. We don't know if we are dead or alive," sums up

Martin, 50, a miner for the last 30 years. Adds Salmi, 45: "Though we are considered permanent staff, our wages depend on the work we do every day. This is a sort of contract work. We can't describe our plight; if we spoke we would be harassed." Laxami, 40, who has breathing trouble, complains: "I don't get even medicine from the hospital and am not allowed to take rest."

The workers have few kind words for the established unions. Ramachandra Paliwal, 80, a veteran trade unionist who is said to be the first union leader in the area and even crossed swords with the British, says: "Trade unionism has become a business. British atrocities cannot match the kind of atrocity our own people are committing on the poor workers." S.R. Chabban, a Youth Congress(I) leader who brought the horrifying story of the June 1 incident to the state Assembly, could not agree more: "They are vultures." Chabban's crusade on behalf of the workers has not been appreciated; argues Mehr: "Why was there no agitation before 1980? Agitation is certainly not by the workmen."

**Unnatural Situation:** Paliwal points out that the workers and their dependents are being forced into a situation where they will either die or become criminals. Schoolteacher Rajendra Prasad says: "The officers are under SAIL while the workers are not. Can you find this kind of a situation anywhere else?" He says that officers are promoted every three years, but the workers retire, and die, as workers. Young Nazir Khan says that one reason for the growing resentment among the Adivasis was that educated people had been employed as workers and they were not going to tolerate exploitation for long.

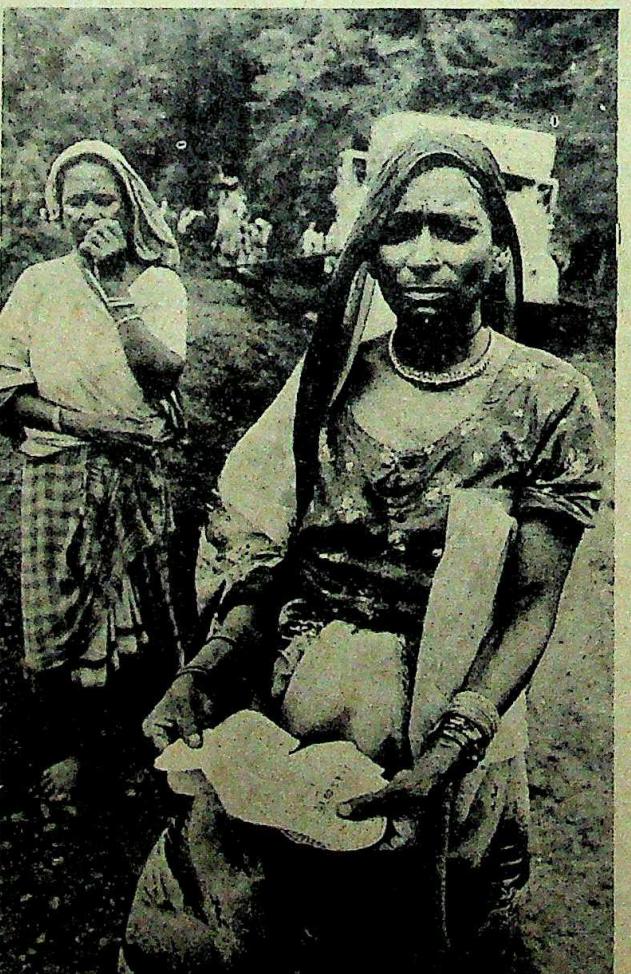
At the moment, however, the Adivasi miners of Gua appear to be fighting a lonely battle, with both management and trade union leaders in an unholy alliance. Last fortnight, Gopeshwar, president of the INTUC-affiliated Ore Mines Workers Union declared in Asansol: "Operations in iron ore mines in Singhbhum and Keonjhar districts of Bihar and Orissa respectively have come to a near standstill, following a spate of gheraos, demonstrations and assaults on officers by the local Adivasis. About 300 officers working in the mines of



IISCO's Mehr (left) and Contractor Budhraja: firm control

IISCO, Bokaro and Durgapur steel plants are afraid to come out and to send their children to schools in the ore mine areas." Gopeshwar has not visited the region in the last three years, but even his pro-management statement did not go down very well with Mehr; said he: "It is not true that operations in any of the mines has come to a standstill. Sometimes tensions build up but this is a local problem."

Gua miner Laxami: "I don't even get medicine"



CC-0. In Public Domain. Gurukul Kangri Collection, Haridwar

**T**HERE is another local problem at Megahatabur, mine, run by the Bokaro Steel Plant. Here, the work of constructing the mines has been entrusted to private contractors—37, according to one estimate—whom were supposed to have employed around 4,000 workers. Xavier Dias and his team of social workers, including Sakumoni H. Anne, Jyotsana and A. Raj, found that no worker was getting the statutory minimum wage, injury compensation, workers and workers killed on the job were not getting compensation. There was no rest shed and no food or shelter. Dias took his findings to the Supreme Court, which quickly ordered the administration as well as tribals Jamshedpur-based Free Legal Aid Committee (FLAC) to conduct inquiries.

The FLAC report, prepared by Izhar Hassan and advocate Barun Sengupta, laid bare grim details: the workers were sheltered, their salaries and safety rules had been violated, the workers had been denied overtime. One contractor had a peculiar rule whereby if a worker was absent once in a week, he lost entitlement to earn the entire amount of overtime for the week. Workers were arrested for injury committed little or no reason—once when the bhadra demanded that Gandhi Jayanti be declared a holiday—and even Dead of the Co has been implicated in several minimum cases.

The contractors do not maintain a muster-roll, do not register the workers and do not pay them in a new minimum wages. In fact, the contractors could not ascertain the number of contract workers posted in Megahatabur. There was no record, which means that even the provident fund of the contractors so regularly deducted did not have to be paid. A team found no first-aid facilities, no latrine or urinal and no room.

**Compensation Denied:** The team also detailed a number of accident cases where compensation was denied. Examples:

► Daso Tisum, employed by Bedi Constructions Company, lost his right arm on the job. He did not get any compensation or salary for the period he stayed in hospital.

► Bagun Largiri was buried under earth and his spinal cord was broken; he was never seen again at mines again;

► Jasman Horo lost the sight of his left eye when a stone struck him. He received Rs 11 as compensation and no other aid.



Paliwal (left) and Chabban: crusading spirit

The strike, however, appears to have improved things, but not very much. Augustin Guria, 16, who took the lead at the negotiating table said that working hours had been reduced to eight a day and wages increased from Rs 10.30 to Rs 11.46. But the dilapidated huts, damp and unhealthy, remained as did the rice, crawling with insects, that they ate. Said Guria: "How can we consume this? Even cattle do not take it." Nawal adds that those who refused the rice were removed from the job. The workers have no choice as there is no market in the neighbourhood and the wild animals in the surrounding forest make forays for food dangerous.

Contractor Budhraja said, however, that he would solve all the problems. He said that though he had written to the authorities for tin sheds for housing, the Megahataburu project people were still to take a decision. He also promised to stop supplying the uneatable rice and to open a shop at the site so that the workers could buy their own provisions and also to provide weekly transport to the market.

**Police Action:** The police seem to be firmly on the side of the powers that be. Three years ago, Gua had witnessed wanton police firings that left 13 Adivasis dead. Between 1978 and 1982, as many as 5,000 tribals have been implicated in 1,252 cases. Between November 1981 and April 1983, the police are said to have pillaged over 25 Adivasi villages in the forest, destroying over 340 houses.

Since March 1980 until the present, one part or another of the area has been blanketed by prohibitory orders under Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code, restricting their democratic rights. And about 10,000 tribals are already facing trial in connection with cases filed in 1978-79 regarding the Jharkhand movement.

In such a situation, with everybody—government, police and management—indifferent to the Adivasis' condition and even active in their suppression, it is inevitable that the mine workers of Singhbhum start taking to the streets in larger and larger numbers to try to break their chains. Chabban asks rhetorically: "Who is going to save them?" To that their answer must be, in a challenge to the law of the man-made jungle that has them in its grip: "Ourselves."



Kumdi worker Augustin: "How can we consume this?"

Several workers complained they were made to work when medically unfit; Krishna Singh was dismissed for demanding treatment. In advanced stages of pregnancy—37 weeks—when they were summarily dismissed without benefit of maternity leave, check-ups: among such including Sakurmoni Bodru and Somnath A. Raj. In such a situation, they were told to continue working, like age, injured Party, who later delivered a baby with the help of Dr killed on a baby with the help of Dr compensation. Moni was not so lucky, her and no help did not survive.

According to Dias says that a number of ordered and injured have died but there is no well as as tribals go back to their villages Aid Comm: they die. He points out that 10 per cent of the 4,000 workers are graduates and by Izhar matriculates but they are not engupta, had to sign on the sheet of paper that sheltered their salaries. None is given a payslip. the workers after the report exposed the hell of the contractors, the Supreme Court passed a worker interim order on May 5, directing the

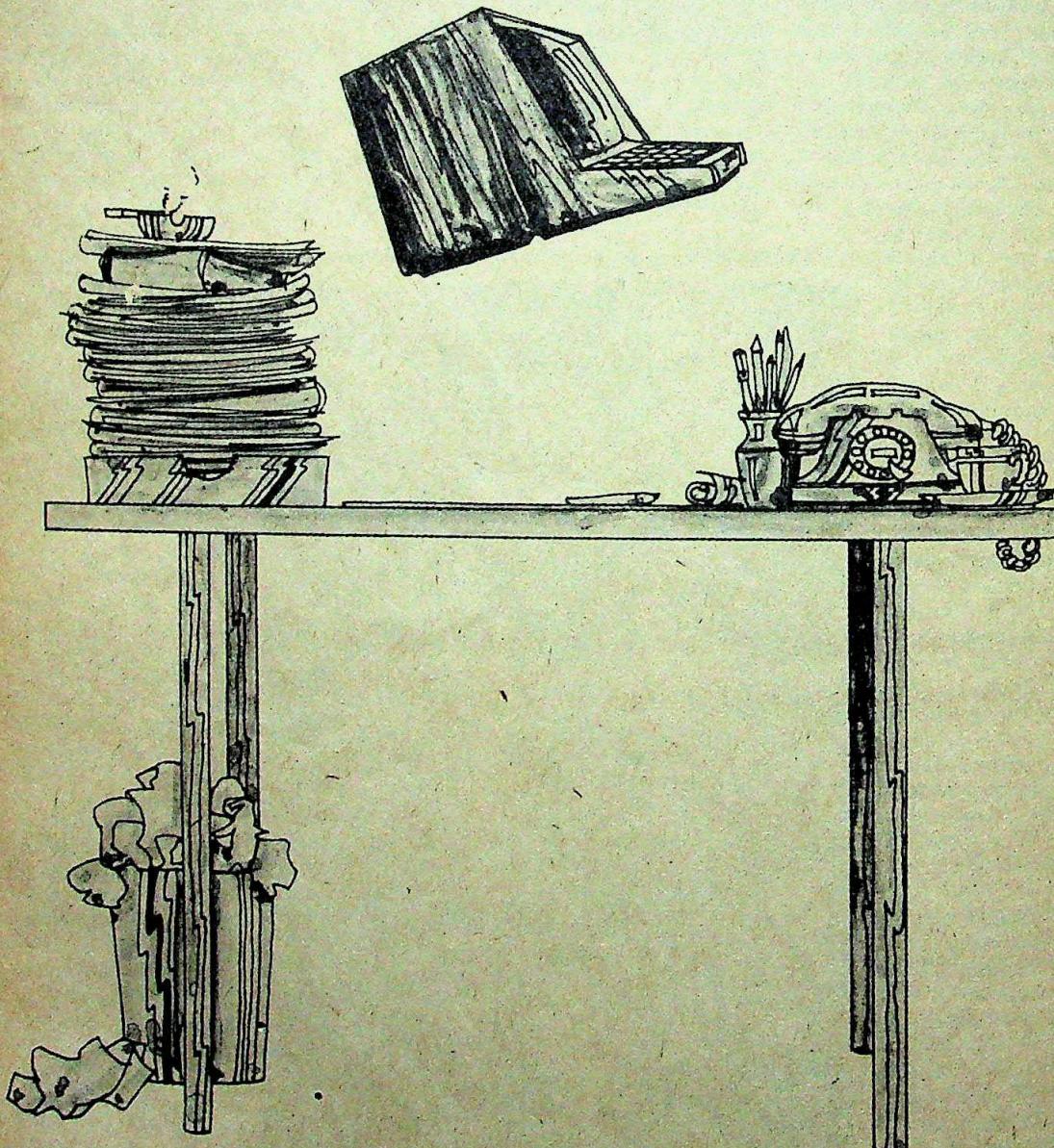
time for sum wage for the tribals, to arrest injury compensation and to receive when the basic amenities. Jayantiro sent out a circular asking even Dead of the Contractors Cell to in sevenat minimum wages were and basic amenities provi- do not matter. The order is yet to be imple- not regard but the official is moving ot pay mld in a new car.

However, the Bokaro authority posted in Megahataburu did appear to bother much about which me- ght of their workers. Megahataburu Iron Ore Project General Manager C.S. Mishra first refused to be paid and then defended the contractors; said he: "Contractors are more than the minimum and offering all facilities. who are trying to raise such a problem have ulterior motives." say that the workers are instigated by "outsiders" at Dias and his team are "ex-

**otten Facilities:** The workers of Megahataburu share their suffering with those of Kumdi, 40 km where a Rs 1.20 crore dam is Megahataburu project is constructed by J.C. Budhraja, Orissa contractor. Late last year nearly 500 of them struck for two days, complaining, other things, about 'houses' from leaves collected from the

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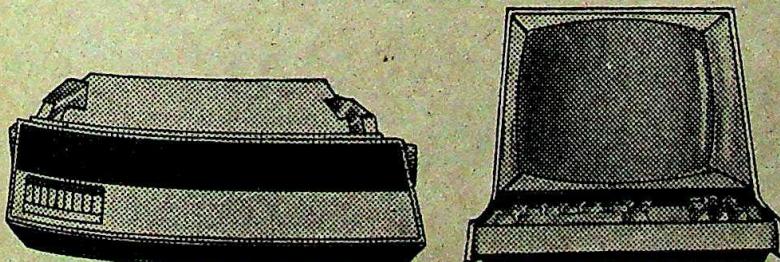
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# **The Workhorse**

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ANDHRA PRADESH

# Stepping On The Gas

**T**HE ANCIENT Indian tradition of the worship of the cow has acquired a contemporary flavour in Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh. Modern votaries of this faith have found rich returns for their trouble—in addition to milk and milk products, the cow now stands for plentiful supply of energy and manure. Cow-dung is fermented to produce methane or marsh gas, not a new concept, but the sheer number of biogas plants installed in the district this year—947—has created something of a record. District Collector P. Ramakanth Reddy says: "It is the most popular cooking convenience in rural areas."

Krishna is one of the 100 districts in the country selected by the National Programme on Biogas Development (NPBD) which aims at making villages self-reliant in fuel. This year, the district earned the distinction of exceeding its 1982-83 target of 350 plants by 597—a phenomenal increase of 170 per cent. This is quite a feat, as only 1,056 plants have been commissioned in the district since 1969. No such progress has been reported from any other district covered by the project, and it is possible that Krishna is the highest achiever among its peers. And Reddy is confident of building 1,600 plants by March 1984 as against the next year's target of 600. Says he: "Cattle and dung are available in plenty. All that the simple technology calls for is aggressive promotion and prompt cash grants."

**Increased Popularity:** With its clean, non-irritating blue flame, the gas has become the favourite cooking facility of the families who own biogas plants, although it can also be used to energise pumps for irrigation or drinking water. Says paddy grower P.S. Ramamohan Rao, who acquired his plant four years ago: "With press reports of gas cylinder bursts, many are now convinced of the safety of the biogas plants." A contributing factor is the difficulty in getting LPG cylinders on time.

Ecologically oriented, the NPBD also aims at checking the denudation of forests which will surely result from too much dependency on wood fuel. But even otherwise, biogas is much more efficient than wood—cattle dung processed through a plant produces 20 per cent more heat, and as

manure, it is 43 per cent richer in nitrogen. Says Radha of Muvvapalem village: "Cooking is no longer drudgery. The work is over in an hour instead of three hours."

Costs vary from Rs 3,842 to Rs 11,000 for plants ranging from 2 cu m to 10 cu m in size. The most popular, however, is the 6 cu m plant costing Rs 6,620 which is ideal for 12-member families that have eight head of cattle. Buyers are eligible for subsidies from the Agro Pumps and Instruments Limited



Radha of Muvvapalem and the biogas plant and (left) Collector Reddy: "most popular cooking convenience"

(APIL)—Rs 2,910 for Harijans and small farmers, and Rs 1,940 for others. Bank loans are also available, but as many as 93 owners of the district's 947 plants availed of only the subsidy, meeting the rest of the cost themselves.

**Merits:** The technology of the plant is fairly simple—it consists of a digester and a gas-holder. The digester is a brick-lined pit in which the dung is fermented—the gas produced bubbles out of the slurry to fill the gas-holder, which fits like a cap on the digester and rises with the accumulation of gas. This particular type is known as the floating dome plant, and has been popularised by the Khadi and Village Industries Commission. An alternative is the fixed dome plant which is designed on the lines of a Chinese model, and is 30 per cent cheaper.

Opinions vary as to the relative merits of the plant; says Y. Mohan Rao of the

Viyavanam Trust which builds the floating dome plants popular in the district: "The fixed dome plant is intended to produce richer manure, and not for supplying gas."

However, advocates of the Chinese model point out that this system has not only solved the wood supply problem, it has also increased food production and provided substantial health benefit in breaking local disease cycles. Besides, it can be built easily by a village mason without any outside technical help. In either case, there are few complaints. Says APIL Chief Executive V. Bhaktavatsalam: "People make their choice based on what they have seen."

**Constraints:** On a national level, National Dairy Development Board, Karnal, has calculated that from a cattle population of 200 million, 900 million tonnes of dung can be got each year to produce 66,000 cu m of biogas. With even one-third of this potential tapped, there is scope for setting up 10 million plants. However, of the target of 3 lakh for the four years ending March '85 set by the Department of Non-Conventional Energy Sources (DNES), only 67,000 have been installed so far. The high capital cost, and poor fund flow are major constraints—for 1983-84 a sum of Rs 13 crore has been earmarked, which covers the installation of only 75,000 plants against a targeted 1,25,000.

But social scientists have pointed out that the increased use of such plants in a small area may deprive firewood gatherers and those who make cow-dung cakes of their livelihood. Already some residents of Veeranjaneyapuram of Krishna district, where a community biogas plant based on dung, human refuse and animal waste ready for commissioning, are feeling the pinch. Says Vijaya, a firewood gatherer: "Why should we pay money for the gas when we can collect firewood or make dung cakes for ourselves and sell it to others?" Referring to another drawback, an old woman Seetha Mahalakshmi says: "What use is any gas if it is supplied only during fixed hours?"

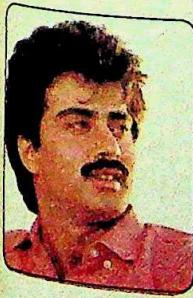
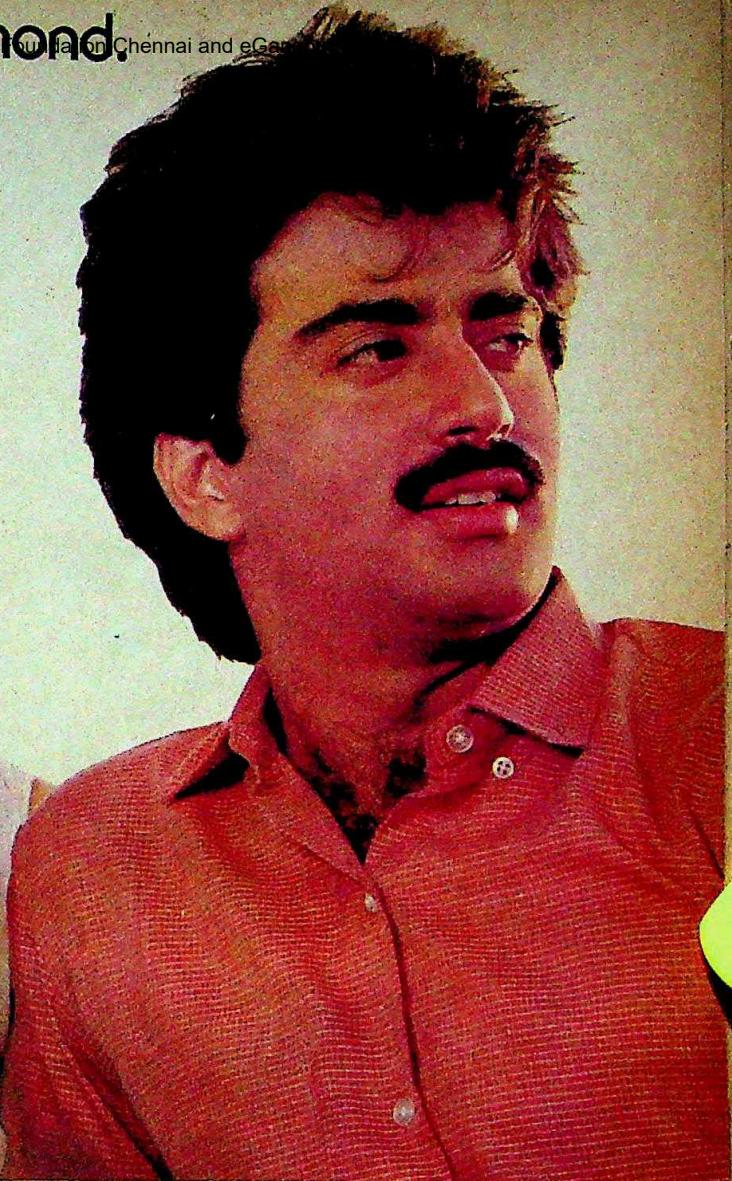
With the added disadvantage of the relatively high initial investment, such resistance may not be countered too easily. Says Bhaktavatsalam: "A community biogas plant is a success only if it is run as a commercial venture. Cooperatives call for a specific ethos that is found in places like Gujarat and Erode. It will be a failure in Andhra Pradesh." However, by and large, the enthusiasm for biogas plants indicates that rural India, at least, could be all set for a new era of cow worship.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

You're the  
with Erasmic  
The blade  
tempered, g  
And then po  
to give it the  
After all, t  
deserves the  
  
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**She may have the diamond.**

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**But you are the man  
with the diamond edge.**

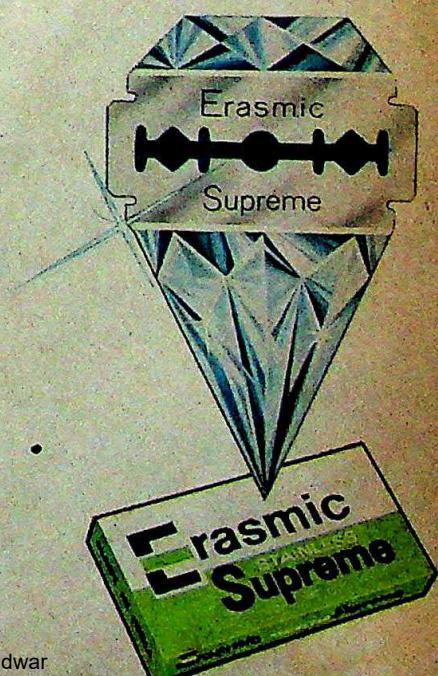
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And then polished and finally Teflon coated  
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After all, the man with the diamond edge  
deserves the perfect blade to give him the edge.

**Erasmic Supreme**

**The blade with the diamond edge.**

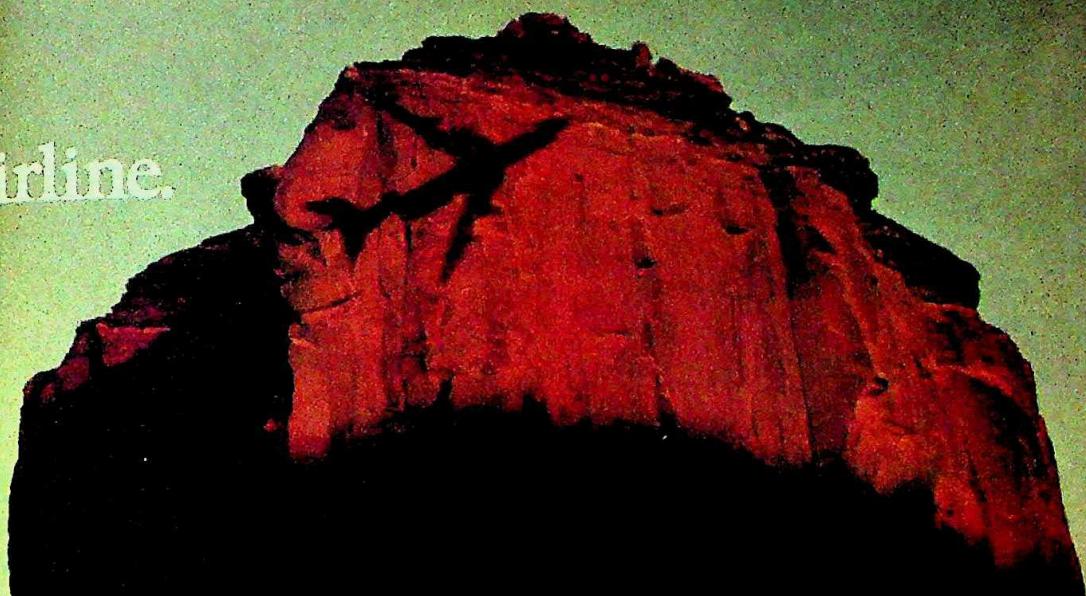


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**BATTERED HALF**

■ Somewhere in the wilds of Maharashtra, a man is face to face with fear every minute of his life. The man is a journalist in a small town and the entity who personifies his fear is his wife, who appears hell-bent on reducing him to jelly.

The journalist is called Bhaisare and his wife is called Bhagirathibai and after the assault and battery had gone on for some time in the cosy

**THE LIVING DEAD**

■ Rarely is it given to man to listen to his friends and associates mourn his death, rarely is it the lot of a human being that he should stand by his own bier and watch a crowd of people weep for their fellow now gone to the happy hunting grounds.

Goverdhan Lal of Jaipur can now claim to have done so, for did he not, recently, wheel his bicycle up to a sad

group of mourners only to find that it was he himself, a hale 45, whom they were setting out with on the final journey?

Information reached the staff of the Jaipur Collectorate one day that chaprasi Goverdhan Lal had died on the way to the office, after falling off his bicycle. The collector and others reached the spot, and made arrangements for the body to be carried to Lal's village. Just

confines of home, Bhaisare dragged himself to a police station and registered a complaint. Unfortunately, Bhagirathibai landed up at the police station, drew her rolling pin from its holster and went for her rather battered other half with gusto. The police watched all this goggle-eyed but a platoon of them finally succeeded in stopping the slaughter.

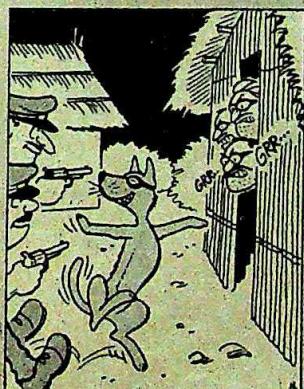
Later in court, the indomitable Bhagirathibai looked

on unperturbed when the judge listened to her husband telling his story and illustrating it with bruises and writhes. The judge fined the woman Re 1, which Bhagirathibai paid on the spot, not however, without giving Bhaisare a look which the dictionary usually describes as one that kills. The fine, when last reports came in, had done little to cool Bhagirathibai's ardour—Bhaisare still seeks police protection.

**DOGGED DEVOTION**

■ Dogs are very faithful creatures but they can get very clinging at times. In Weirsibil of Bharatpur district in Rajasthan, a group of robbers set out to, well, rob. They had a dog who just wouldn't let them go out and rob on their own so they took him along as well, thinking that he would be good company on the way.

They came to a house



which looked a lucrative target. So it was with practised ease that they swung legs over walls and busted windows in the gentle light of the moon. The dog wagged his tail and imitated his masters. They got into the house, the dog sticking close to them and then, as often happens, someone upset a whole cupboard of *bartan* and soon drowsy queries of "Who, what, where, how" could be heard, making the

place sound like a journalists' convention. The robbers stood not upon the order of their going, but went—but the dog couldn't and didn't.

After that it was child's play for the police, who found the dog wagging his tail all over the place. All they had to do was to put a leash on him and let him lead them to his masters' hide-out. What was that somebody said about a dog being man's best friend?

**MATCHLESS WINS**

■ Football is an intensely competitive game, and the tally of goals at the end of a match doesn't usually amount to much. However, four teams in soccer-insane Calcutta last night were involved in two encounters that yielded no less than 194 goals, and two of the outfits scored no goals at all. Indian Boys Athletic Club (IBAC) and International were two third division teams

at the bottom of the table. The next matches would decide who got relegated to the fourth division. International's next match was with Juga Shanti and Juga Shanti was reportedly "advised" to lose by a huge margin so that International came above IBAC on the basis of the goal average. The advice was taken and, in a most dreary farce, all 20 players thumped the ball into the Juga Shanti goal in a monotonous shuttle from net



to centre to net to centre etc. The final score: International 80, Juga Shanti 0.

However, IBAC had got wind of the plot and they staged a similar, drearier farce in their match with Victoria Sporting. After the same net to centre ad nauseam tactics, IBAC won 114-0. Calcutta football circles are now reverberating with shouts of "Shoot! Shoot!"—and they don't mean goals.

—compiled by JAGANNATH DURASHI

AIDS

# Epidemic Of Fear



THE DISEASE is far from being as widespread as was London's bubonic plague and it does not bring its victims to sudden and terrifying ends as did the Masque of the Red Death. But the fear and loathing and panic that the scourge is causing from coast to coast in America could well provide the backdrop for an Edgar Allan Poe horror story.

The mystery disease sweeping this land is known as AIDS—short for "acquired immune deficiency syndrome". Since it was first detected in 1979 it has killed nearly 2,000 victims, most of them homosexuals. But last fortnight, doctors in California reported that three infants had succumbed to AIDS as a result of blood transfusions contaminated by the killer disease. There is no cure in sight.

US health authorities have officially declared AIDS to be the nation's "number one health problem". Last month, the House of Representatives met in an emergency session to appropriate \$12 million for exclusive medical research on AIDS. If the rate of infection continues at its current pace AIDS is expected to claim 1.6 million victims within the next five years. A medical solution does not seem imminent. As Dr Harold Jaffe, a medical detective at Atlanta's prestigious Center of Disease Control put it: "Looking for a quick fix is not very realistic."

**Weakened Body:** In some mysterious, intangible way the sickness plays such havoc with the body's immune system that the sufferer is unable to fight off even the smallest infection. Over a period of time—ranging between a year to two—the victim dies of several simultaneous infections which may be accompanied by debilitating malignancies.

A well-publicised case is that of Paul DiAngelo, a homosexual and AIDS patient. Bedridden at the Harvard Medical School at the age of 33, DiAngelo is fighting a cancer known as Kaposi's sarcoma, as well as an uncontrollable diarrhoea that causes him to lose 10 quarts of fluid a day. He is constantly fed juices and deodorised tincture of opium, a constipating agent. His diet, a mixture of rice and bananas is the same that is fed to victims of dysentery and famine in Bangladesh to check loss of body fluids.

For DiAngelo, the disease had an innocuous beginning—fever, chills, a slight diarrhoea that recurred off and on for four months. Later his chest, arms and belly became covered with small birthmark-like lesions. Today, having lost 30 pounds, he battles for survival, his body hooked to a life-support system that continuously pumps

plasma fortified with potassium and magnesium into his veins.

**Untouchables:** *The New York Times* recently reported the case of Ron Doud, interior designer for New York's swank disco Studio 54 who died of AIDS at 34 after five months of treatment. Of the series of infections from which he suffered that left him unable to communicate or control his bowel movements, the final killer was pneumocystis carinii pneumonia, the most common infectious disease said to mostly pick-up sex AIDS victims.

While he was confined at Lenox Hospital in New York, afraid of the disease, refused to clean out his room. Richard Ruskay Doud, a lover of 10 years told *The New York Times* that when he took the ailing hazards. Doud out of hospital to fly him to his mother's house in Phoenix, "the prostitutes wanted to throw him off the plane". Nurses refused to care for him in Phoenix, and after he died, the hospital staff "wrapped him in the sheets he was in contact with" and put him in a plastic bag". Undertakers at the funeral home "poured so far the embalming fluid on top of the casual sheets he was in, closed the plastic bag and put him in the casket".

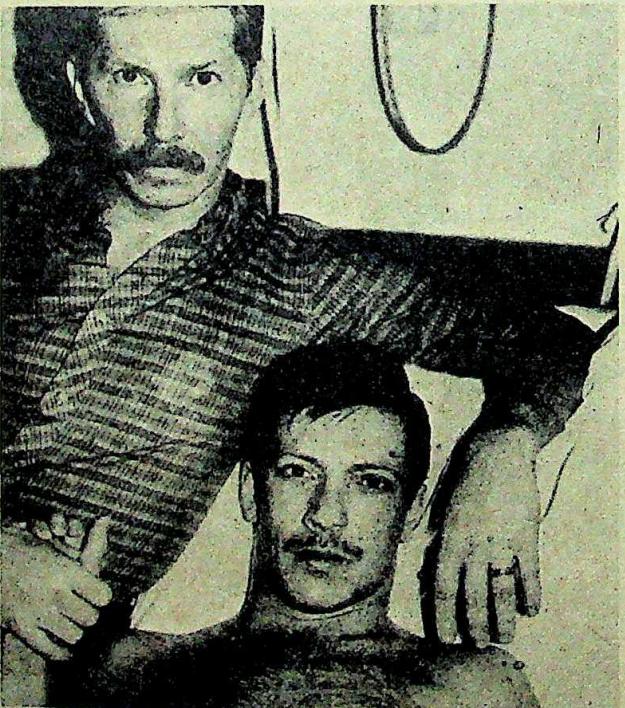
New York State's association of morticians last month declared a 60-day moratorium on embalming the remains of AIDS victims. The general moratorium was lifted only and seems to be under pressure from the state health authorities. Mike Callahan, founder of an organisation called Gay Men With AIDS spoke about AIDS cases having a friend "who was dying and he was dying and during that period he heard about the 60-day moratorium by morticians. Hence, family members are not even going to bury me if I do not develop

**Hostile Organisations:** Drivers, police patients are victimised not only by their disease but also by the public's fears. The victims are the lepers of America. And there many in this country who would prefer to see them confined to colonies as were the lepers of yesteryear. This is not only because Americans are petrified of the disease but also because the victims have

are mostly homosexuals. Numerous Christian fundamentalist religious leaders in this country who coalesce under a right wing political group known as the Moral Majority preach that AIDS is punishment from God for sexually aberrant, un-Biblical behaviour.

Says Douglas James, a dance student in Philadelphia who has been diagnosed as having 'pre-clinical AIDS': "A lot of people like my aunt and uncle are saying that gays deserve AIDS and ought to be locked up." And James Carter, a nutrition professor at Tulane University told a newspaper that a local doctor told him: "Jim, you're

*In some mysterious, intangible way the sickness plays such havoc with the body's immune system that the sufferer is unable to fight off even the smallest infection....*



AIDS victim Kenny and friend Jim (left) in hospital...

try to punish them? 'Cause if he is, it ain't enough."

ST as the epidemic of sexually-transmitted herpes, now said to afflict nearly 20 million Americans is beginning to cause the children of the "sexual revolution" of the '60s to think twice before going in casual, recreational heterosexual encounters so too is the fear of AIDS causing homosexuals who emerged from their closets during the "Gay Pride" movement of the same decade to re-examine their promiscuous, multi-partnered life-styles and move away from monogamy.

Homosexual bath-houses and bars that have mushroomed across the country are reporting declining business. While gay bars said to pick-up flesh markets, bath-houses are places where men may have sex with a dozen or more men in a single night. One such bar in New Orleans reports that business has dropped more

ork, janitorial house in New Orleans reports that business has dropped more than 20 per cent during the last two years. In Texas, preachers are calling for the closing of all homosexual bars as they are considered a threat to the public health. And the Moral Majority has launched a campaign to ban homosexuals from donating blood to the blood banks.

While health officials believe that hospital staff disease is transmitted through direct contact, infected needles or contaminated blood, they do not have any definite evidence so far that it can be spread through casual personal contact. There is not yet sufficient data to determine the most common way the disease is transmitted.

**Disease Information:** So far, no embalming health specialists have reported AIDS victims. Thus, the general population at large only seems to be in no danger. A sheet released by the US Public Health Service last week noted: "No AIDS cases have been found to date." AIDS has been transmitted through casual or even close daily contact with AIDS patients or persons in the high-risk groups. For example, family members other than sex partners of AIDS victims have not developed AIDS. Ambulance drivers, police and firemen who have been exposed to AIDS patients have not fallen ill. Doctors and health care personnel have not developed AIDS due to exposure to AIDS patients." Notwithstanding these assurances the public is clearly in a state of panic. San Francisco landlords have begun evicting homosexual tenants. In many cities

the country, bath-houses and bars carry public health warnings about AIDS. One of the better known victims of the AIDS panic is Morris, the 40-year-old publisher of *The Sentinel*, a San Francisco newspaper for homosexuals. Since he was diagnosed as having AIDS three years ago he has been evicted twice from his apartments. General Fear: As the fear among the general population has increased, several nurses in California have resigned rather than tend to AIDS victims. And two ambulance drivers in New York were fired for refusing to transport AIDS patients to hospital.

Studio technicians in local television stations in San Francisco and New York threatened to strike if AIDS victims were allowed to enter the studios for on-the-air interviews.

Blood banks in major cities are reporting serious drops in blood donations because donors fear they might contract AIDS through needles infected by AIDS patients. And in Washington, patients fearful of contaminated blood are either postponing scheduled surgery or insisting that blood for their operations be donated by close relatives.

*The Washington Post* reported that AIDS telephone hot lines in New York, Philadelphia, Atlanta, Chicago, San Francisco, and Los Angeles "have been flooded with calls from people who fear that they will catch AIDS from elevator buttons, swimming pools, court documents, relatives of AIDS victims, or food handled by homosexuals".

**Wary Homosexuals:** But in attempting to solve this medical dilemma, US health officials are encountering different ethical problems.

Epidemiological researchers, in order to get to the bottom of the medical mystery, must ask AIDS patients or potential victims in the high-risk categories the most intimate details about their personal lives. The patients fear that these questions violate their as well as their friends' right to privacy. They are concerned that, since government agencies share information, the most sensitive details about their private lives will be spread all over government files.

Investigators' questions range from whether a patient uses drugs to whether he's been a prostitute or has had sex with animals. And invariably the questions cover the habits and private lives of friends and lovers. The respondents choose to lie thereby compounding the difficulties of medical detectives.

Callen, founder of Gay Men With AIDS, recalled in a recently published interview: "I know a guy who would check into the bath-houses Friday night and not check out until Monday morning. In conversations with us (we found) he probably had 5,000 sex partners in his life. He told government researchers he'd had only two. He said to us: 'You think I'm going to tell them I was a slut? I'll go to my grave first.'"

Gay movement activists also charge that the conservative Reagan Administration is hostile to the homosexual life-style and is dragging its feet in committing resources to research and battle AIDS because it afflicts homosexuals. But Reagan Administration officials disagree. Health officials claim that there are probably more scientists across America working on AIDS than have worked on any other epidemic in the United States.

**Footnote:** On July 30 a New York bank robber used a unique hold-up weapon to make off with \$4,900 from the Chemical Bank. He handed the bank tellers a note that said: "I have AIDS. I have less than 30 days to live. Give me all \$20 bills. No one will be hurt. Cooperate." The bank tellers handed him the money.



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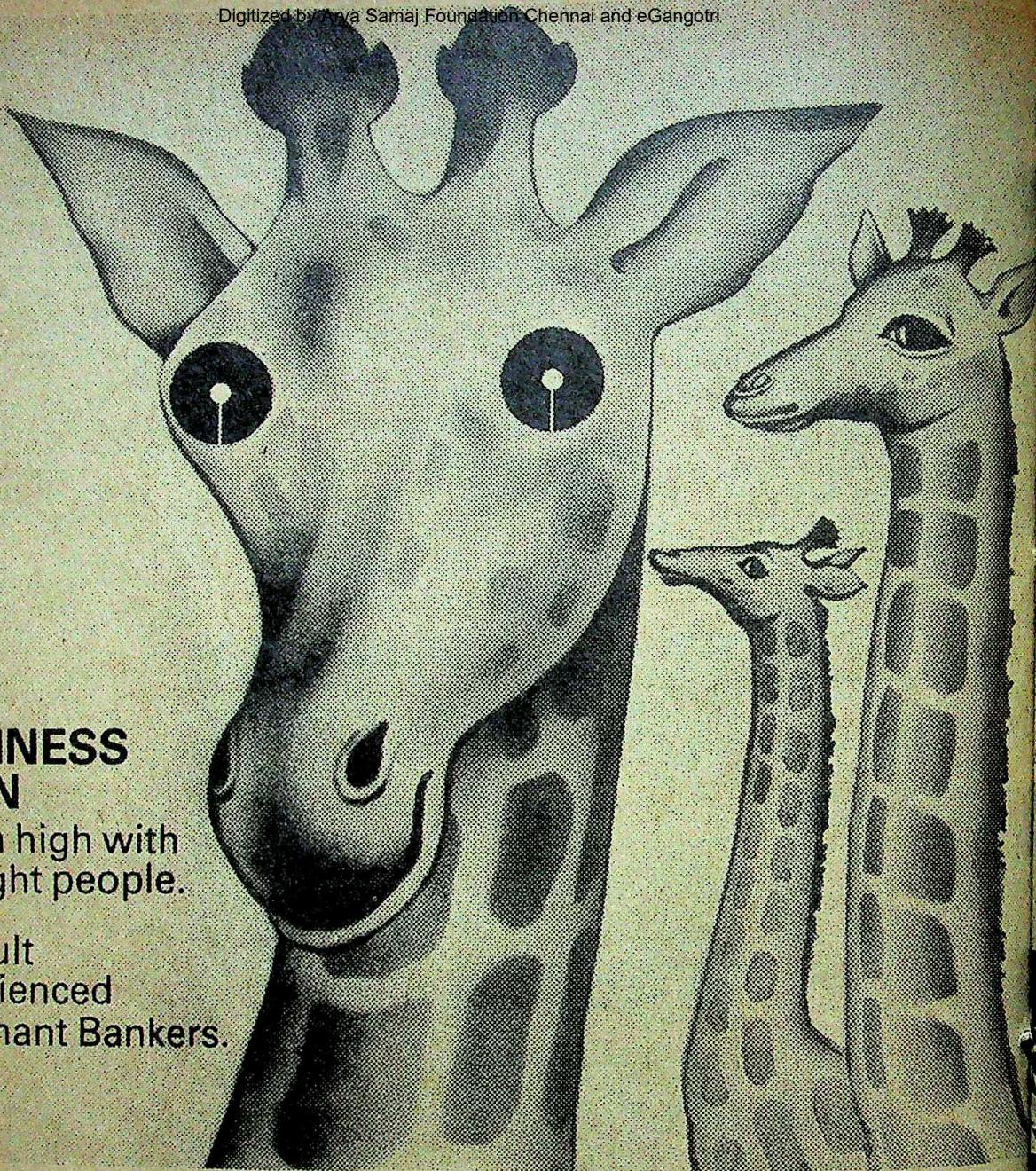
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# Harbingers Of Hope

IT WAS the most bizarre of beginnings. The inaugural meeting of seven South Asian foreign ministers in New Delhi last fortnight embracing Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal and the Maldives, appeared to be an August requiem, held as it was under threatening clouds of the anti-Tamil carnage in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister, the scholarly A.C.S. Hameed, made a major surprise by turning up for the meeting in the midst of a welter of charges and counter-charges between New Delhi and Colombo including the alleged remarks attributed to Sri Lanka President Junius Jayewardene that Sri Lanka feared invasion by India, and he had asked four countries, including Pakistan and Bangladesh, for help.

Though the allegation was promptly denied, it served to underscore one vital fact concerning the efforts towards regional cooperation—that events of an ethnic nature like the Tamilian tragedy in Sri Lanka directly affect the entire region. It also re-empha-

sised the fact that India, the largest and most powerful of the "seven sisters", is viewed with unnatural suspicion by the other members of the South Asian Regional Cooperation (SARC) club.

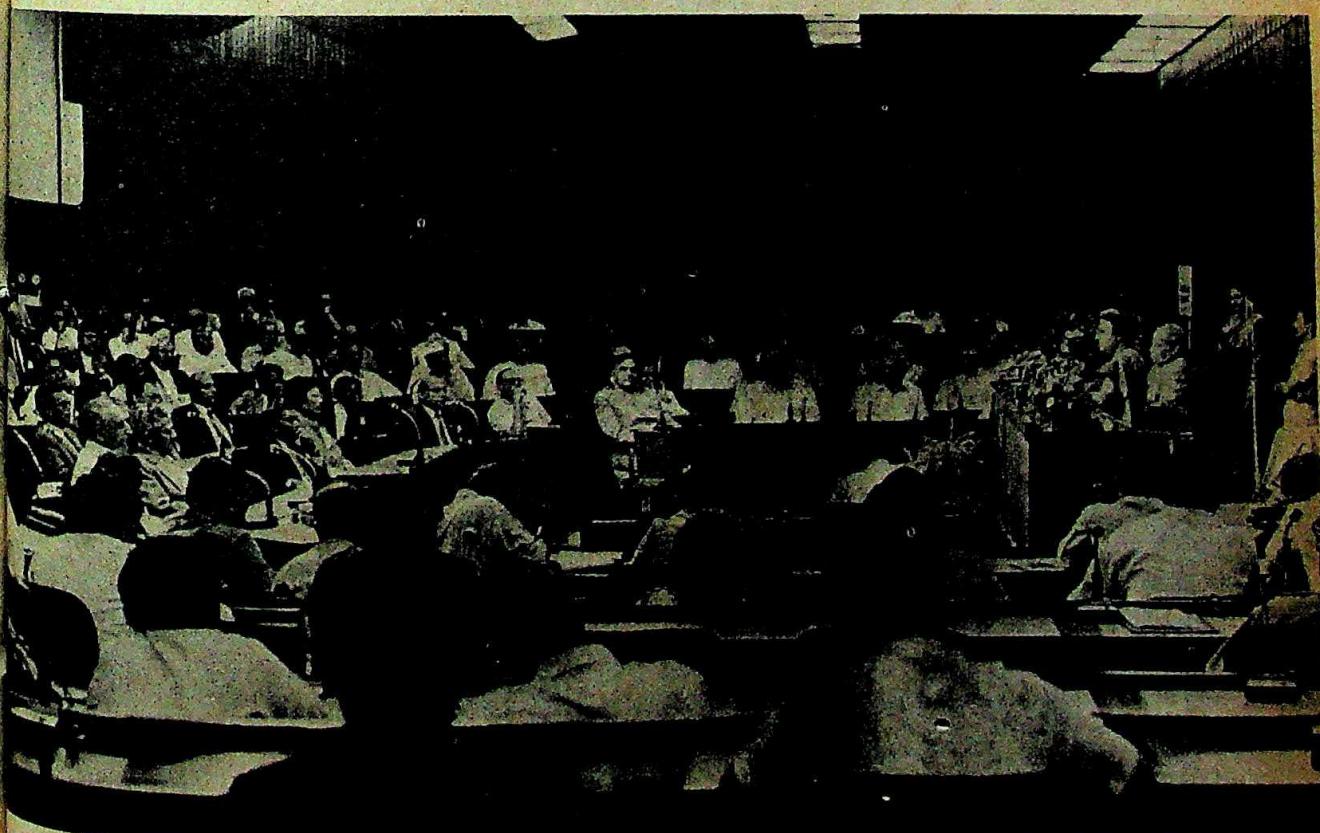
**Good Beginning:** Yet, for all that, the SARC conclave turned out to be something of a minor miracle. Mrs Gandhi struck an appropriately sombre note in her inaugural address, describing South Asia as a "troubled region" but winding up with the upbeat declaration that "I am glad we are making a beginning. We have our political differences but economic cooperation will give a strong impetus to closer friendship and greater stability in South Asia".

Despite the "political differences" that have hamstrung any previous efforts at regional reconciliation, the two-day meetings of SARC were remarkable for the contagious atmosphere of bonhomie and comradeship that pervaded. Obviously, the SARC idea, mooted two years ago, had taken deep root and the foreign ministers were determined to take it beyond mere rhetoric. Every single one of the six foreign ministers interviewed by INDIA TODAY were enthusiastic about the

progress made and the goals to be achieved. As Bangladesh Foreign Minister A.R. Shamshud Doha remarked: "I think all of us were surprised at how quickly we were able to formulate things. There was no sense of recrimination, no reservation. we didn't play games with one another which means the basic elements of close relationship exist."

Two years ago, when the late Ziaur Rahman of Bangladesh first floated the SARC idea it appeared nothing more than wishful thinking. The two most powerful members of the region—India and Pakistan—were hardly enamoured of the idea but for different reasons. India viewed the proposal with blinkered suspicion, fearing that the other six were trying to gang up against her. Pakistan, as Foreign Minister Sahabzada Yakub Khan admitted, had turned away from South Asia and was assiduously wooing the Middle East which it identified itself with. Even Sri Lanka was looking towards ASEAN with intentions of applying for membership there.

**Ground Rules:** The idea, however, was too logical to be ignored and once the first meeting at Colombo of the foreign secretaries took place in April 1981, it was evident that perceptions had changed. Colombo laid down the basic ground rules which were accepted with alacrity, the most vital being that regional cooperation would not be a substi-



Mrs Gandhi inaugurates the SARC foreign ministers meet in Vigyan Bhavan: significant step

tute for "bilateral accord" nor should it be "inconsistent with bilateral and multilateral obligations". Since then, three more meetings of foreign secretaries, at Kathmandu, Dhaka and Islamabad, and almost two dozen meetings at the technical level, have sorted out the nuts and bolts aspect and clearly identified the dos and don'ts.

Thus, when the New Delhi deliberations began, individual positions were well known and it was only left to put the official seal of approval on the idea. The foreign ministers approved an integrated programme of regional cooperation which embraces agriculture, health, transport, telecommunications, weather forecasting, cultural affairs and sports. Though the declaration excludes the two most important factors—trade and industrialisation—the significance of the birth of SARC cannot be diluted. None of the foreign ministers, or Mrs Gandhi, concealed the fact that New Delhi was a small step on what promises to be a long and rocky road.

**B**UT THE fact that the step has finally, if belatedly, been taken speaks volumes. For one, it has been taken in the teeth of protracted and prickly bilateral differences, mainly between India and the individual SARC countries. The Kashmir issue, the Farakka barrage, the Tamils in Sri Lanka, the Bangladesh refugees in India, the Soviet presence in Afghanistan, are only some of the more prominent among them. It also meant that the mutual distrust—from the other SARC members regarding what they perceived as India's efforts to dominate the region—and India's own suspicions regarding the gang of six, has now largely evaporated.

In fact, much credit must go to the Indian Foreign Ministry negotiators for dispelling much of the doubts about India and Indian intentions. Being the dominating power, India had to bend considerably backwards to convince the others of its genuine desire for peace and cooperation. In that

context, the agreement among the SARC members to exclude trade from the framework of the declaration is understandable.

**Trade Question:** Though a vital element in any future evolution of SARC, trade is the joker in the pack. India's industrial and technological advantage over the others has clearly given rise to the fear that dismantling existing trade barriers will lead to the region being swamped by Indian goods. "India, more than the others, is conscious of this factor and that is why we have merely suggested cooperation among the state trading agencies at this point of time," says a Foreign Ministry spokesman.

Yet, there is every indication that any proposed trade agreement would be mutually beneficial. Currently, the intense competition between India and Bangladesh in the marketing of jute, with Sri Lanka over tea and with Pakistan over textiles and carpets can easily be made a complementary exercise along the lines of OPEC. Similarly, Pakistan's wh

#### INTERVIEW

## Common Ground

LAST fortnight foreign ministers of seven South Asian nations gathered at New Delhi's elegant Vigyan Bhavan for the inaugural meeting of South Asian Regional Cooperation (SARC). It was the first meeting of its kind in South Asia's history and a sense of new enthusiasm and hope pervaded the atmosphere. In exclusive interviews with INDIA TODAY Senior Editor S. VENKAT NARAYAN, the visiting foreign ministers—all barring Sri Lanka's A.C.S. Hameed, who had to rush back to Colombo soon after the first session—spoke about their expectations from SARC. Excerpts:

Yaqub Khan, Pakistan



"We have developed an ability to outgrow sorrow and impulses to seek revenge. Once again we are getting interested in South Asia."

GEOGRAPHICALLY speaking, Pakistan is located in the twilight region between South Asia and the Middle East. We are like a junction point between two cultural streams, a double-headed eagle that looks East and West. The loss of East Pakistan was a painful experience. It forced us to look away from South Asia and look up to the Middle East for inspiration.

We are making a serious and sincere

effort to rationalise our relations with India. We are taking interest in SARC. We wish to integrate ourselves into the South Asian community.

An economic miracle is taking place in Asia, in the region beginning with South Korea, Japan, Taiwan and Singapore and extending up to Australia. At a time when Western Europe appears to have become exhausted and is experiencing a period of decline, it is interesting to see a part of Asia throbbing with life.

South Asia has enormous economic potential. This will probably make the centre of gravity tilt towards us. Asia is like an awakened giant. The South Asian foreign ministers' meeting marks the beginning of a new era for one-fifth of the human race that lives in the area.

Fathulla Jameel, Maldives



"Let us not be ambitious to begin with. Let's concentrate on short-term and more important objectives like getting closer to each other and working together."

THE MOST important thing is that what we all had been dreaming of has become a reality. SARC's first priority is closer and direct contact as a group at the highest level possible so that we can exchange our views.

We are victims of a colonial legacy. If things are going to take time to work out, it's because of the complexities of legal and administrative differences that

we have, and certainly not because of political, ideological or ethnic differences. We hope that through the various coordinating groups we will be able to find a common ground. It will take some time but I won't say we won't succeed.

Once these things are achieved, let the people of the region and their leaders think about what to do next, and whether to have common security perceptions and whether we should act as a well-knit group in international forums to gain benefits for our people. Such ideas should follow the less ambitious plans not preceding them.

Padma Bahadur Khatri, Nepal



"We in Asia have to improve our image in those things which affect the lives of our people."

IT IS a new area we are treading on and our decision to proceed in this direction with measured pace and necessary preparation was based as much on practical consideration as on the experience of our region. Judging from the progress SARC has made over the past two years, we have reasons to feel confident that our future efforts and achievements would measure up to any regional record in this direction.

There may be some differences among us but at the same time there are many similarities. I fully agree with those who believe that SARC will contribute to

the improvement and relations in the region.

I'll tell you talking about me five to ten minutes. I have much business the telephone becomes clear are to be considered.

There which we can operation and the money purchasing purposes without permanent and we survive.

Lyonpo Da



ALL OF us cooperated about it can stand each other in controversial matters mustn't rush and steady onto ourself

... can be bought by India at considerably cheaper and more convenient terms imports from the US.

But even without the trade aspect, SARC is potentially a considerable collective in international affairs, embracing as it one-fifth of humanity. Individually, of the seven is considered international important. Collectively, they could be creditable that one of the key issues upon is the principle of unanimity which lays down that only those proposals put forward by all seven will be taken up for further action. In other words, even the least member, in this case Maldives, can put any proposal and that all seven have an equal say in SARC affairs, and every country will have charge of at least one regional port.

Though the foreign ministers decided not to set up a permanent regional secretariate along at this time, nor to prescribe monetary contributions by each of the seven govern-

ments, indications are that SARC will have to start off with less than Rs 1 crore as contributions from the seven. The foreign secretaries will function as a committee to approve specific projects, allocate funds and oversee work being done.

The foreign ministers agreed that only multilateral questions and issues calling for cooperative solution would come up before SARC; it would not waste itself on bilateral problems. Political issues would also not be considered. The decision that the seven foreign ministers should meet at least once a year takes the birth of SARC one step ahead of ASEAN which, started far less ambitiously and was originally limited to the meeting of officials only.

**Hopeful Signs:** But there is still no call for undue optimism. The New Delhi meeting laid the foundations but it is the political will that the rest of the edifice will have to rest on. In the past, it was the political element that bedevilled relations among the seven. But

there are hopeful signs that the sheer scope and potential of SARC will override any political considerations. For the first time, there are indications that India and Pakistan are finally edging closer together. The Sri Lanka crisis could have easily converted itself into an international issue between New Delhi and Colombo but Foreign Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao's hurried trip there followed by Mrs Gandhi's telephonic conversation with Jayewardene has turned the situation around.

What the SARC conclave proved without doubt was that the seven sisters have matured enough to realise that bilateral differences should not come in the way of regional cooperation any longer. It also revealed the genuine desire of all seven to transform SARC from a dream into reality. If it works, it will be the biggest step forward that the region will have taken. If it doesn't, it will be a tragedy of unlimited proportions.

—DILIP BOBB

the improvement of political atmosphere and relationship among the countries of the region.

I'll tell you one example we were talking about among ourselves. It takes me five to six hours to reach New Delhi from Kathmandu on telephone, but I can get to London or New York within five minutes. India, with whom we have so much business, becomes remote so far as the telephone is concerned and London becomes close. These are the things that are to be corrected.

There is a lot of money in our region which we can spend for constructive cooperation among the seven countries. But the money is being used wrongly, like on purchasing armaments for defensive purposes. All of us should realise that without peace there can be no development and without development we can't survive.

**Lyonpo Dawa Tsing, Bhutan**

*"We live so close to each other, yet, in terms of human understanding, awareness of each other's problems, we are far from each other."*



rest of the world is a very distant place. If you go to Nepal, other places are very far away.

We should not get into controversial bilateral issues just now. A lot of these problems are due to ignorance and suspicion. Being afraid of your neighbour because of ignorance, you suspect and begin to harm each other. In our region, it is very difficult to contact each other, there is practically no communication.

One of the ASEAN foreign ministers told me that whenever there is a problem, the foreign minister of one country picks up the phone and rings up his counterpart in the other and has a chat, and the problem is simply solved. Hence the stress on establishing efficient communication links. This will help our leaders to talk to each other, understand each other. Once these bridges have been built, even the controversial areas may perhaps become more amenable to solution. Once there is confidence, you give the benefit of the doubt to the other person and that creates a good atmosphere.

**A.R. Shamsud Doha, Bangladesh**

*"Together, we've become a tremendous force, not to dominate others but for collective bargaining, a force which can lend dignity to our people."*

**A**LL OF us genuinely desire regional cooperation, but we should go about it cautiously. We have to understand each other, keep away from controversial matters and build confidence. We mustn't rush. Things are going well, slow and steady. We all function as an island unto ourselves. If you go to Bhutan the

other. Which means the basic elements of a close relationship exist. That's mutual trust and understanding. We are able to accommodate each other straightforwardly, without batting an eyelid, without referring back to our capitals.

Cut off as we are from each other, we can't even direct-dial each other, we can't even fly to each other's capitals without breaking journey. It took me nine and a half hours to get to New Delhi from Dhaka. It takes me as much time to get to Colombo and 24 hours to get to Bhutan, a country barely 23 miles from our border. Even among our seven countries, not all have diplomatic relations with each other. This is the extent of the wilderness in which we live.

The most important thing I would like to see is a visible establishment of communications among all of us—all forms of communication: telephone, radio, railways, water, everything. This will make it possible, in this enormous region, to trade with each other, invest in each other. As a result of this development, I hope that in my lifetime we will be able to form common political thoughts, formulate common policies which can thus create a new balance, a balance of peace in the Indian Ocean.

My son feels we have done nothing. He is 32 and he says that he should get into a car in Dhaka and drive through Nepal, Bhutan, India and get back to Dhaka in two weeks' time. He says he is going it all the time in Europe and America, why not here? I think it's not a distant dream. It needs political will. That we have.

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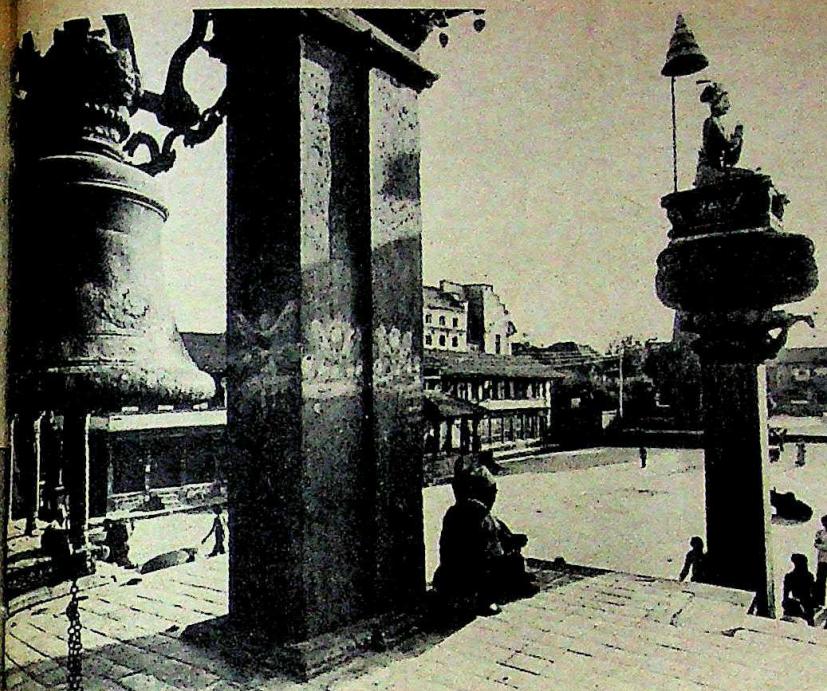
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A Bhaktapur temple: living time machine

## Dream Sour

IT WAS a wedding gift young Crown Prince Birendra of Nepal had so eagerly asked for, and one the West German Government presented so enthusiastical-  
ly. It generated great expec-  
tations, and with the royalty  
so deeply involved, no one  
have expected the Bhaktapur Deve-  
l opment Project (BDP) to die out with a  
per, as seems to be the case now. Eleven  
after the experiment began to restore  
rumbling old city 15 km east of Kath-  
du, with magnificent pagoda-style  
es, monuments and woodwork, the last  
Germans departed last fortnight. The  
ment thus ended on a sour note and  
only a little over half of the work done.  
It began in 1972 when the West Ger-  
many asked Birendra what he wanted as a  
ing gift. Birendra had an unusual re-  
quest. Reminding the Germans that they  
the world leaders in the art of restoring  
nt cities he asked if they could preserve  
or three beautiful but crumbling temples  
e town of Bhaktapur. The Germans  
more than willing.

**Crumbling City:** The first batch of  
ns who flew in were dazed by what they  
in Bhaktapur. It was not, as they dis-  
ed, a few buildings that needed reno-

vation. Practically every building in this ancient capital of the once powerful Newari kings was a work of art. Each window was a magnificent piece of carving and almost each one was falling out of the decaying old brick walls. After a bit of thinking the Germans decided to preserve the whole city instead. The temples, including a majestic five-storey edifice, were the first to be restored and the Germans were cruising along merrily when discordant voices were first raised in 1975.

Bhaktapur has always been a leftist citadel in this highly religious Himalayan kingdom and the youth soon began to insinuate that the Germans were spending so much money on fancy restoration work while the town continued to wallow in filth and misery. It had no sanitation, no sewage and very little else by way of civic amenities. In 1976 the Germans relented and changed the priorities from the esoteric to the utilitarian.

However, that was not the end of their troubles. Says author and Nepalophile Desmond Doig, who has been associated with the project: "The restoration work gave employment to so many craftsmen, masons and artificers. Now they were all suddenly rendered jobless and so the pressure built up from their side. The Germans soon got fed up of the local pressures and the problems of

dealing with two bureaucracies, the Nepalese and the German, and decided to quit."

**Tourism Boom:** But even if they left the job incomplete the Germans had opened up a hitherto little-known Shangri La to the thousands of tourists that visit Nepal every year. Today almost every house in Bhaktapur is a small hotel with signs painted in French, German and Spanish. A medieval structure also houses a restaurant in the middle of the town, facing the five-storey temple and there are more tourists in the town than its original inhabitants. Curio shops have come up all along the narrow cobblestone street linking the major monuments and the tourism boom has certainly boosted the local economy.

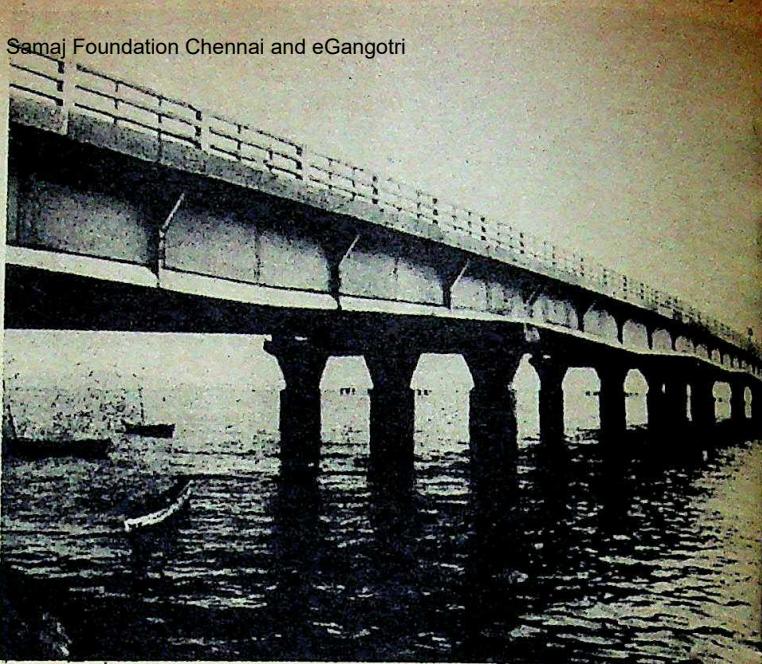
Not many in the town seem to thank the Germans for that. Most people have complaints, like H.K. Malla, an old resident tracing his origins to the royalty that built the town. Says he: "The Government fell into the German trap. The Germans are undoubtedly great restorers. But in the absence of any involvement of the local officers there is no knowing how many of the antiques were smuggled out in the bargain." Similar allegations have been made in leftist circles and sections of the press but Nepal government officers dismiss these as motivated.

**Renewed Efforts:** Whatever the opinions on the past there is unanimity that the work must continue. Says Doig: "It was great when Bhaktapur got the PATA (Pacific Area Travel Association) Heritage Award for 1980. The Nepal Government now says the work must continue and they are trying to find a way." The Bhaktapur enthusiasts are, nevertheless, expecting to find new sponsors: PATA is holding its next Heritage meeting at Bhaktapur on November 1 this year and that may just be the occasion to win over some rich foreign organisations to Bhaktapur's cause.

But any renewed efforts had better keep in mind the lessons of the past. The problem in Bhaktapur is preserving a heritage without giving the highly sensitive inhabitants a feeling that they are being systematically reduced to museum pieces. Says Doig: "It is silly to ask them to keep their houses as they are just because they look good to us. Yes, they have those beautiful, massive, carved windows. I admire them but would not like to be on the other side of one. Their houses are so dank, dark inside. They also need modern amenities."

A new approach, thus, will have to have a delicate balance of development and restoration, something the Germans failed to achieve. Or else, the wheel of time would seem to have stopped for this dream city that Doig so aptly calls a living time machine.

— SHEKHAR GUPTA in Bhaktapur



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# The Flesh Trade

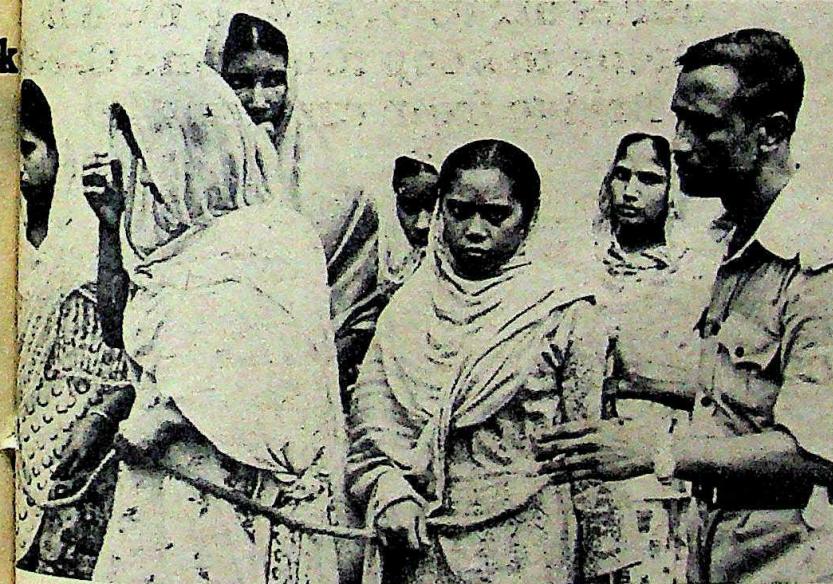
THE ARRIVAL of a routine flight from Pakistan at the Dhaka International Airport last month generated a lot more excitement. As a dazed group of young girls in the ages of 15 and 25 got off the women's organisations in the city up in arms to protest against yet manifestation of a phenomenon that is growing as a serious social problem in flesh—trafficking in girls.

the six girls who had arrived that day in Pakistan had spent some time—ranging from eight months to seven years—at Aman, a camp in Karachi where they were accommodated after being rescued

also forced her to perform menial tasks about the house. Mahmuda was sold away for Taka 10,000 (Rs 4,000). Jarina, who had eloped to Karachi with her lover, was forced by his family to marry another man. In each case, the girl finally turned to the police in sheer desperation, and was taken to Darul Aman before being sent back to Bangladesh.

**Escalating Problem:** Over the past three years, such cases of trafficking have increased alarmingly. From the eastern district of Chittagong alone, at least 200 girls have been lured away, according to official sources. Situated near the Bangladesh-Burma border, this district has become the nerve-centre of the inhuman flesh racket. Apart from the local girls, the young nomadic Burmese Ruhinga Muslim girls who cross the borders also become the victims of the traffickers.

According to the police, there is an organised gang operating in this region in league with agents in the neighbouring countries of Burma, India and Pakistan. In February this year, some members of the gang were caught in a police raid, and 13 girls



The rescued girls being escorted by police: organised exploitation

air exploitors. The girls had the same long tale to relate—driven by poverty, pride and a sense of desperation, they themselves in the hands of men who offered them jobs and a better life in India or the Gulf countries.

Instead of the jobs they expected, they themselves hustled into Pakistan without documents and papers. The shysters—in some cases lovers or seemly factors—sold them off to customers with much ceremony. Rahima was sold to a man who got her a job in a tailor's shop while appropriating her salary, he

rescued. In another raid on May 12, another gang was captured near the Burmese border in Chittagong and two Burmese girls, who had been promised jobs in Saudi Arabia, were rescued.

Despite these efforts, there appears to be no let-up in the trafficking. No estimate has been made of the number of girls who have been lured out of the country on false hopes. With the escalation of the problem, women's organisations are demanding stringent measures by the Government to check the evil.

—IHSANUL KARIM in Dhaka

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SOUTH ASIA

# The Ethnic Cauldron



"OURS is a troubled region," said Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to the foreign ministers of seven South Asian countries when she inaugurated in New Delhi their first-ever meeting on the first day of August. It was probably the understatement of the year. The tragedy of Tamil-Sinhala killings in Sri Lanka cast its dark shadow on the deliberations of the foreign ministers and its long shadow on the entire region. Each foreign minister was in a sombre mood. Each realised that what was happening in Sri Lanka could happen in their own country. In conversations with INDIA TODAY, the visiting foreign ministers conceded that the region's labours to lay the foundation of multilateral cooperation could be blown into bits any time if ethnic violence broke out in an uncontrollable manner in any of the states. Not only are the South Asian countries multiracial, multilingual and multireligious within their own respective frontiers, they have ethnic, religious and linguistic groups that transcend national frontiers. The tinder of ethnic discontent and intransigence poses the single biggest threat to the stability and integrity of all countries of South Asia.

The situation is indeed loaded with the most perilous explosives. Despite a high level of military spending by each South Asian country, none feels threatened by the military might of the other, though there is still a good deal of loose talk of an "Indian threat" in Pakistan and a "Pakistani threat" in India. However, cross-national ethnic tensions and conflicts kindle fears of intervention in the "internal" affairs of one by its neighbour.

The Sri Lanka press conjured up the ominous prospect of an Indian "invasion", and reports came in, quoting unidentified official sources, that President Jayewardene had asked the US, Britain, Pakistan and Bangladesh for troops to face that contingency. The Colombo newspaper *Sun* even quoted Jayewardene as having warned his cabinet: "If India, by some chance, decided to invade us, we will fight and maybe, lose, but with dignity." The point is not whether the President of Sri Lanka did actually say these words, or express an actual fear of Indian invasion. The point is that large segments of the Sinhala population entertained perceptions of probable Indian intervention, and that is enough to make a serious situation disastrous.

The South Asian region is packed with potential cross-national ethnic tension and conflict. Two million Afghan refugees have been camping in Pakistan for nearly four years now, and large numbers of Pushtoons have racial and linguistic affinities with their brethren in Afghanistan. The Baluch too are spread over three neighbouring countries—Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan. Pakistanis are alive to the capability of Afghanistan and the Soviet Union to aggravate ethnic tensions and conflicts in their politically emasculated country. There is no doubt that if ethnic conflicts do break out in Pakistan, Pakistanis will also see a long Indian hand in them. As much as many Indians, including Rajiv Gandhi, perceive a long, hidden Pakistani hand in the Akali agitation and do not conceal their suspicion that the demand for Khalistan has tacit, if not active, Pakistani support.

*Not only are the South Asian countries multiracial, multilingual and multireligious within their own respective frontiers, they have ethnic, religious and linguistic groups that transcend national frontiers. The tinder of ethnic discontent and intransigence poses the single biggest threat to the stability and integrity of all countries of South Asia.*

**Troubled Kingdom:** The Nepal Government is said to be worried about the influx of Indians into the kingdom. Whether Indians even constitute one-third of the population of Nepal, or much less, are seen by the rising Nepali middle class as foreign exploiters willing to commit to the kingdom's development and the uplifting of the abysmally poor mass of urban and rural population. Correspondingly, a "Nepali question" is raising its ugly head in an extensive area of the Himalayan foothills in north-eastern India, from Sikkim to northern Bengal to Assam. The India-Nepal border is open to human movement; this is an essential attribute of India's special relationship with Nepal. The open border encourages Indian traders and skilled workers to enter Nepal for opportunities of business and the Nepali poor to migrate to India in search of livelihood. Ethnic Nepalese have become politically important in Sikkim, where they compete with Bhotias and others for political power; in Darjeeling and adjoining areas, they are pressing for the retention of their separate political identity, thereby making their relations with Bengalis abrasive.

Bangladesh has 90 lakh Hindus. No one knows if or when they will feel threatened by the misnomer drive of the present government of the country. A sudden deterioration of the delicate community balance in Bangladesh would lakhs of Bengali Hindus to join Indian states. Since they will be admitted to Assam in re, the pressure will be on Tripura, Arunachal, Meghalaya and Bengal, none of which state or will, accept the burden of its population. This is what is happening in Sri Lanka, the Baluch since 1947. The acute situation in eastern India and bring India-Bangladesh to the point of explosion.

Ethnic, linguistic and religious kinships die hard. Second-generation Polish-Americans ("Polaks", in American English) feel the pull of ethnic links with the population of communist Poland. If ethnic pulls generate nothing more than human sympathies and inspire humanitarian assistance, these do not strain state relations. In reality, ethnic pulls generate political pressures on governments which are often unable to ignore them. What is true is that political leaders exploit ethnic tensions and conflicts to get mileage or to rehabilitate themselves and their parties among their followers. There is nothing more easy than to blame foreign powers for a government's failure to keep its own house in order. Political leaders and governments need enemies as much as they need friends. In a skewed world, enmities determine friendships as much as friend determine enmities.

The ethno-political situation in South Asia is getting set to settle its own domestic differences with the passing years for several reasons. First, the government becomes poli-

aid to be won is fast becoming the style of politics; the tendency is to much less, than Asia, political leaders are showing a shared proneness to exploiters who are long-term and bewilderingly complex, demanding aid to be won is fast becoming the style of politics; the tendency is to

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tion in Sri Lanka just cannot go on with periodical massacre of Tamils without inevitably provoking India to react with anger, indignation and anguish. Especially when the 2.7 million Tamils in a population of 15 million have extensive temporal and spiritual linkages with Tamil Nadu which is only a strip of blue water away. Pakistanis will react as darkly to the killings of Muslims in India as India would to the killings of Hindus in Bangladesh. Same is the case with Nepal and India.

How, then, do South Asian countries grapple with the increasingly intransigent ethno-political problem? The first requirement is an adequate objective understanding of the problem in its various ramifications. This seems to have eluded Sri Lankan leaders ever since the early 1950s when the Tamil problem first exploded. The Institute of

Ethnic Studies in Colombo has done a lot of very good work but has been sadly unable to influence the minds of political leaders, much less of the rising Sinhala middle classes. Tamils have failed to integrate themselves in an all-embracing Sinhala political community which does not therefore exist.

**Antagonism:** The Tamils of Sri Lanka were a privileged community when the island got its independence in 1948; it had been pampered by the British. No community gives up its privileges without struggle. For over 30 years now Sinhalas have been persecuting Tamils for their good time under the British. Alienation between the two communities has now turned into antagonism. It has cost Sri Lanka the life of its most dynamic prime minister, a dozen bloody riots in 32 years, and the transformation of a peaceful constitutional struggle into a protracted armed conflict between a new generation of young Tamils and an equally hardened new generation of young Sinhalas. The current move to herd all Tamils together in the northern peninsula of Jaffna would only lend a sharp geographical edge to the armed struggle unless the political leaders can work out a solution.

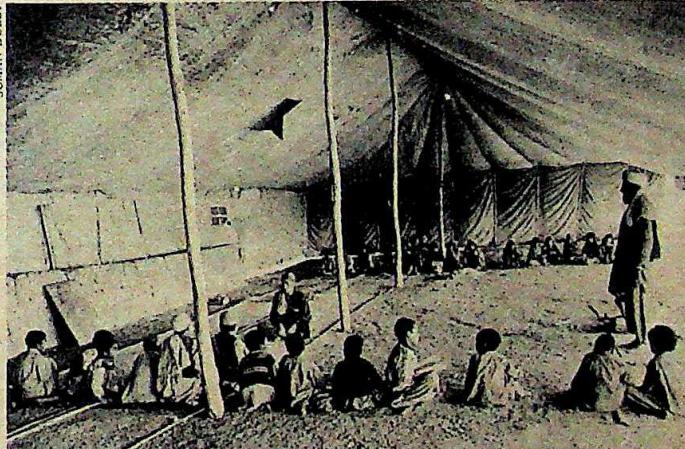
Chances of that happy finale are slim.

India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan are in a relatively better position. They still have time to take care of ethno-political problems. No country in South Asia can afford not to be sympathetic and even generous to large cross-national ethnic or religious minorities living within its frontiers. Policies of denial and persecution can only bring in a bitter harvest for each of the countries concerned. A policy of tolerance must go side by side with firm timely action to prevent an ethnic situation from getting politically sour. This is possible if all South Asian countries are equally conscious of the danger ethnic explosions or communal conflicts can pose for each one of them. Each lives in a glass house, none can afford to throw stones at another.

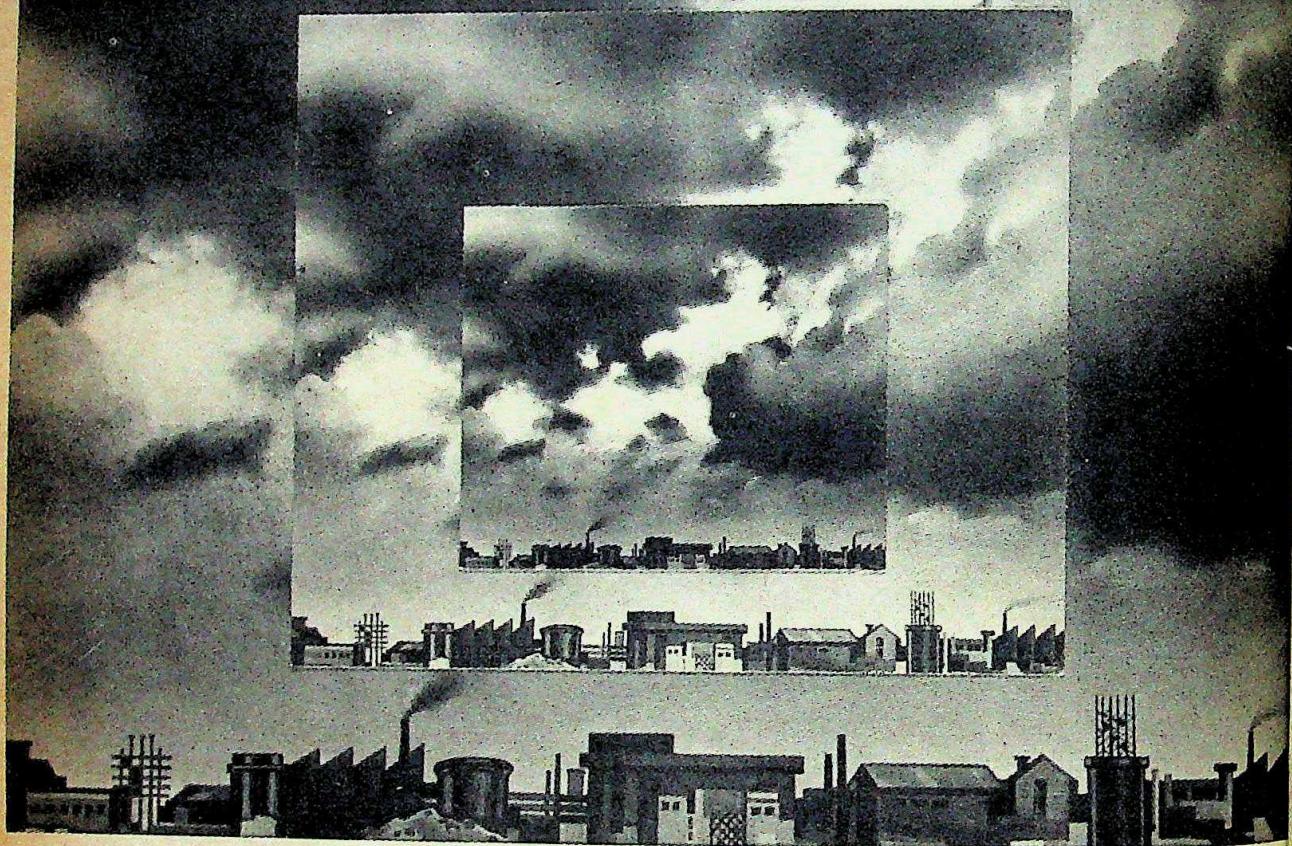
PRAVIND PUSHKARAN



SUDAN DUBEY



Bangladesh refugees in 1971 (top) and Afghan refugee children in Pakistan: long-standing problems



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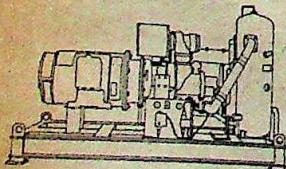
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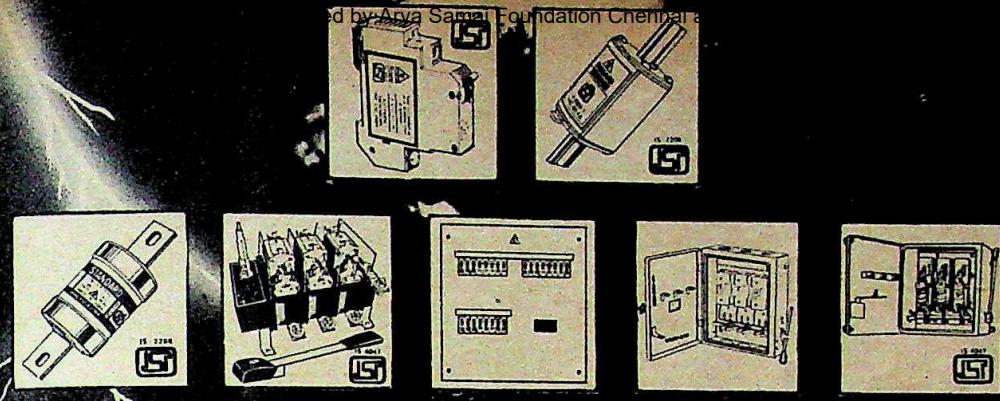
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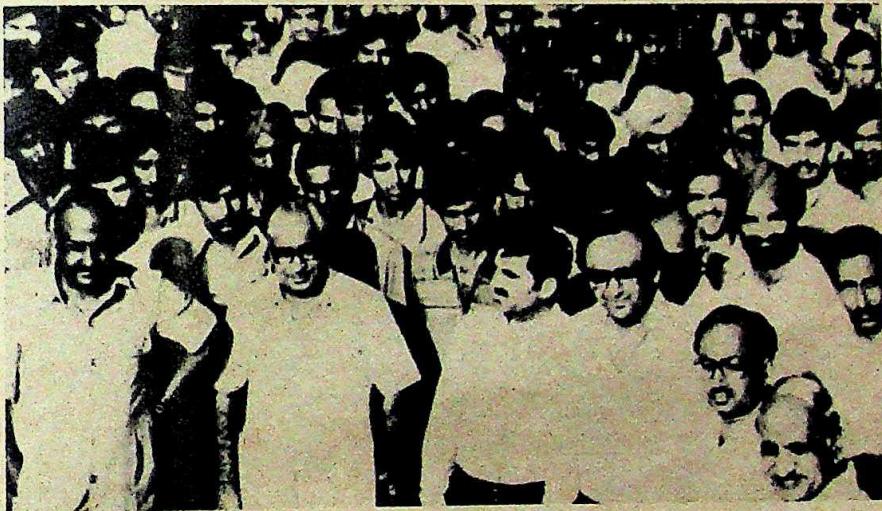
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MADHYA PRADESH

# The Killer Constable

**I**T WILL go down in history as one of the most bizarre crimes ever. In 50 minutes of madness in Mandsaur in Madhya Pradesh, Police Constable Ramesh Sharma gunned down 14 people and injured nine others before a fellow policeman killed him in turn. But the strangest aspect of the mass murders is that no one knows what made Sharma go berserk.

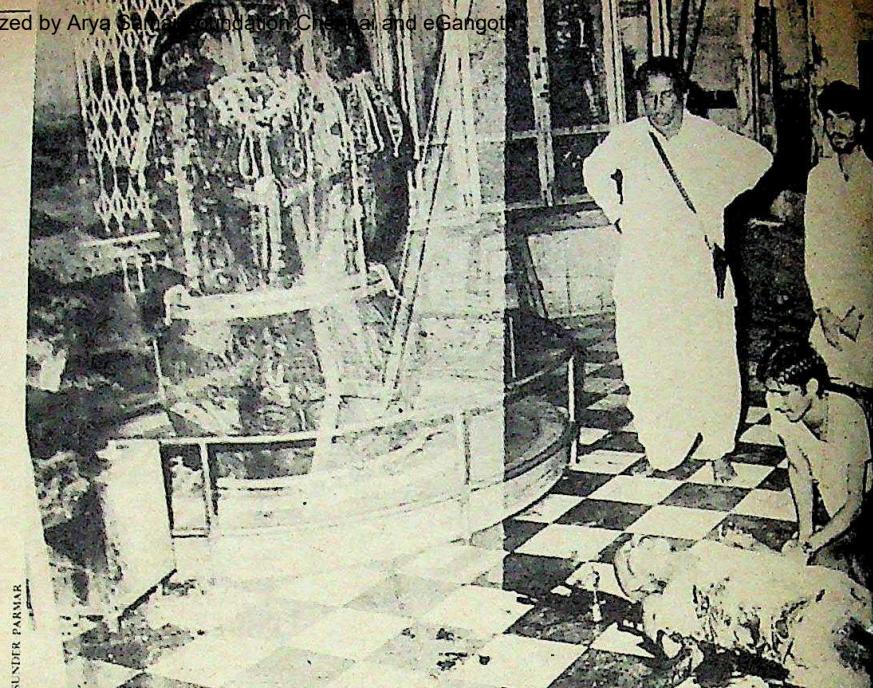
On the evening of July 23, Sharma was on guard duty at the well-known temple of Pashupatinath which is separated from the town by the river Shivna. Four constables—including 28-year-old Sharma and a head constable—were on a round-the-clock vigil. Sharma was armed with an Enfield .303 rifle. None of his colleagues was around.

Sharma had behaved perfectly normally during the day. In fact, according to Babu, an 18-year-old student who helped the owner of a tea shop adjacent to the temple: "Fifteen minutes before he started murdering people, Sharma had come and had tea. He sat casually and discussed some photographs of the Pashupatinath temple that a few pilgrims had bought." Babu was witness to five of the seven murders that took place in the temple area in about 12 minutes.

**Sudden Fit:** According to him, at 7.30 Sharma reappeared, the rifle cradled in his arm and pointed it at teenager Pradeep, who was the tea stall owner's nephew. "Should I shoot you?" he muttered. Pradeep, thinking it was a joke, began to get up when Sharma shot him.

Sharma then turned his attention to Babu who was saved by the appearance of Rakesh Jain, owner of an idol shop next door. Before he could realise what was happening, Sharma shot Jain in the shoulder. Screaming with pain, Jain stumbled into the nearby Hanuman temple.

At the same time, Motia Bai, owner of another shop in the area started shouting at Sharma in rage. Sharma calmly turned around and shot dead both Motia and her son Hari who was having dinner right behind his mother. Babu, who was watching the killings says that Sharma looked quite unruffled during the entire chain of events. Meanwhile, Rakesh Jain was still moaning with pain inside the temple, so Sharma went



SUNDER PARMAR



SUNDER PARMAR

Priest Ramachandra lying dead in the temple and (left) Ramesh Sharma at the end of his killing spree: bloodlust

after him, first carefully taking off his shoes, walking inside, shooting the cowering Jain at point-blank range through his abdomen, reappearing, putting on his shoes, before carrying on his bloody spree.

In the meantime, Komal Chand Chauhan, a local postman who had seen the goings-on from the bridge over the river Shivna rushed to get help. Said he: "I met policeman Kanhaiyalal Dube who was also posted at the temple in the evening. I warned him, but he said he would calm down Sharma." But before Dube could say a word, Sharma shot him dead.

**Random Killings:** Meanwhile in the Pashupatinath temple the evening *aarti* had begun with about 60 people, most of them pilgrims from nearby Shajapur district. Hari's wife Sumitra, who had witnessed her husband's murder ran to the temple pleading for help but no one paid any heed to her.

And then Sharma appeared, firing a few shots and wounding some of the pilgrims. He

shouted to the priest, Ramchandra Shukla to halt *aarti*. Shukla, unaware of what Sharma was doing, raised hand to silence him. Sharma first shot him in the upraised arm and then through the heart. Shukla fell dead in front of the idol to which he had prayed more than half a dozen years.

His pocket bulging with cartridges, Sharma then crossed the bridge and headed towards the town. It was around 7.45 p.m.—the time when the police station in the city got its first intimation of the havoc being wrought two and a half kilometres away.

Three policemen, armed with lathis, climbed into a three-wheeler convinced that they could deal with the situation. By the time they reached the temple, Sharma had killed another seven people on the streets—still picking his victims at random. Explained R.K. Mathur, 32, acting superintendent of police, Mandsaur, where the incident took place: "There are several armed people in the area through whom Sharma passed. But who could dare shoot a policeman in uniform?"

Just before eight, another picket of policemen, two of them armed, also moved towards Sharma. One of them, Mewa Lal, 35, tried to get behind Sharma who suddenly turned around and fired at him. Said Mewa Lal: "It was only then that I realised that



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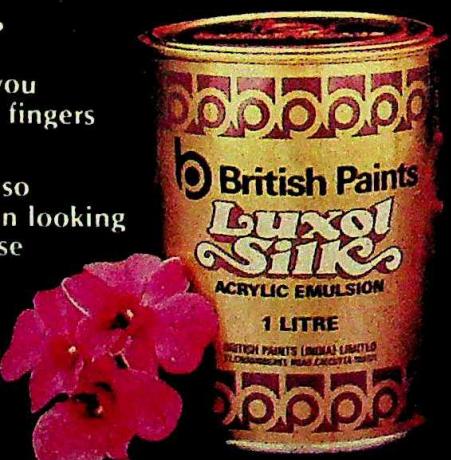


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turned killer." The shot missed but killed 18-year-old Sakina. Once more but Mewa Lal's caught Sharma in the chest—he before he could be taken to hospital.

**Public:** In all, Sharma had fired there was one in the chamber and were found in his pocket. Mathur a constable is supposed to have rounds on his person. But 250 50 each for the five men on duty in a locked ammunition box at

public raged with impotent fury, a of their anger directed against the which took 40 minutes to stop Sharma during which time seven persons were Moreover, there was another violation: on guard duty, all the men are to remain in the guardroom from sunrise. But Sharma was alone went berserk.

What sent Sharma into a murderous fit? most plausible theory is that his mind have become unhinged because of at office or at home. Police sources that Sharma had perhaps been getting than his share of unpopular guard duty is intensely disliked by instables. Otherwise, Sharma was to be a quiet, sensitive and honest man. There are unconfirmed suggestions about strain at home; however, the only certainty is that a sane man's fit of madness remains a mystery even a judicial inquiry will find to unravel.

—SREEKANT KHANDEKAR in Mandsaur

## listed Trail

INCIDENTS are occupational hazards for those who live life in the fast lane. But the death last October of high-delhi businessman Krishan Sikand, no accident. It was brutal and listed murder. On October 2, last Sikand was blown to bits in his Sunder apartment by an ingeniously-delivered parcel bomb. Sikand was alone in a apartment when the explosion though a birthday party for his ten-nephew was being celebrated on floor.

Finally, police investigators were baffled by the crime, since Sikand was known to be a go-ahead individual with no known But attention inevitably focussed style, particularly his female companion. Since his divorce from his first wife, production director of Sikand Ltd, an engineering firm, had roman-

tic liaisons with two other women. Inevitably, the trail followed by the police led to his latest companion, Rani Choudhry, a sultry, attractive divorcee, and her previous husband, Lt-Colonel Jiti Choudhry, a highly-decorated officer posted in military headquarters in New Delhi.

**Conspiracy Suspected:** Last fortnight, police claimed the first breakthrough in the case when on August 1 they arrested Choudhry, nine months after the murder. Choudhry who had already been under interrogation by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) for four days before the arrest was in police custody for seven days and then was remanded to judicial custody till August 20, when the case comes up for hearing. The CBI, who had taken over the investigations last April could not have taken such a drastic step without accumulation of sufficient evidence to link Choudhry with the crime. Military personnel cannot be arrested by civilian investigative agencies without the express permission of military headquarters, and it is obvious the CBI's is a strong one. In court, the CBI public prosecutor stated that there was sufficient material on record to establish that the offence was a "well planned and deep-rooted conspiracy" and that there was sufficient

Choudhry entering court



evidence to establish the complicity of the accused.

However, the recapitulation of the events provides sufficient clues of the track the investigations are taking. The bomb that killed Sikand was actually a booby-trapped grenade with Pakistani ordnance markings and a detonator used by the Indian army. According to CBI sources, the grenade possibly came from the arsenal captured by the Indian army during the 1971 conflict with Pakistan. CBI sleuths investigating the case have seized letters written by Choudhry to his former wife, who was living with Sikand when the murder took place, begging her to come back to him. Choudhry himself was living with a war widow, Kishori, whose husband had been killed in action. Kishori, a slim, simple-looking woman, has asked for anticipatory bail fearing arrest. Ironically, Kishori was Sikand's first romantic involvement after his divorce and it was through her that Sikand met Rani Choudhry.

**Missing Clue:** Meanwhile, the CBI have spread a dragnet for Choudhry's batman, Satish, who they suspect delivered the parcel bomb that killed Sikand. The parcel had been left on the staircase and found by Sikand's servant who handed it over to the unsuspecting victim. Earlier, the police had arrested Ani Rai, Sikand's aquarium cleaner who had a police record, but released him after intensive interrogation proved his innocence. The CBI now is convinced that Satish, who is untraceable, can provide the final clue to enable them to nail down the case.

Choudhry's lawyers strongly deny that their client had anything to do with the murder and that he has been arrested on false charges. They claimed that Choudhry had been tortured, unnecessarily harassed and not allowed to sleep. The CBI, the lawyers claimed, was attempting to get a false confession.

The CBI's case will only be clear when the matter comes up for hearing, but CBI spokesmen are confident that they are close to cracking the case. But on the face of the evidence, and the nine-month time gap, that could be misplaced. The known evidence is purely circumstantial and Choudhry's service record will surely stand in his favour. He is the son of a former Delhi Police inspector general.

But there is also the fact that he had possible access to the grenade as well as the know-how to construct the bomb—something that the CBI will certainly lean heavily on. His marital relations with Rani and her relationship with the murdered man are also bound to be key elements in the sensational case which is bound to get even more sensational once the proper hearings begin next week.

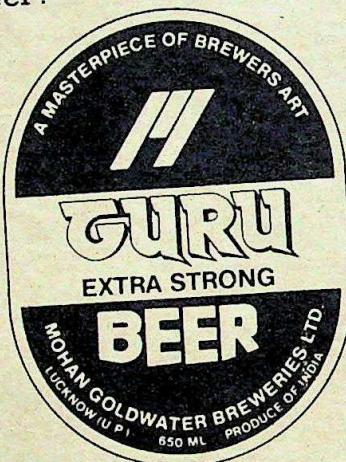
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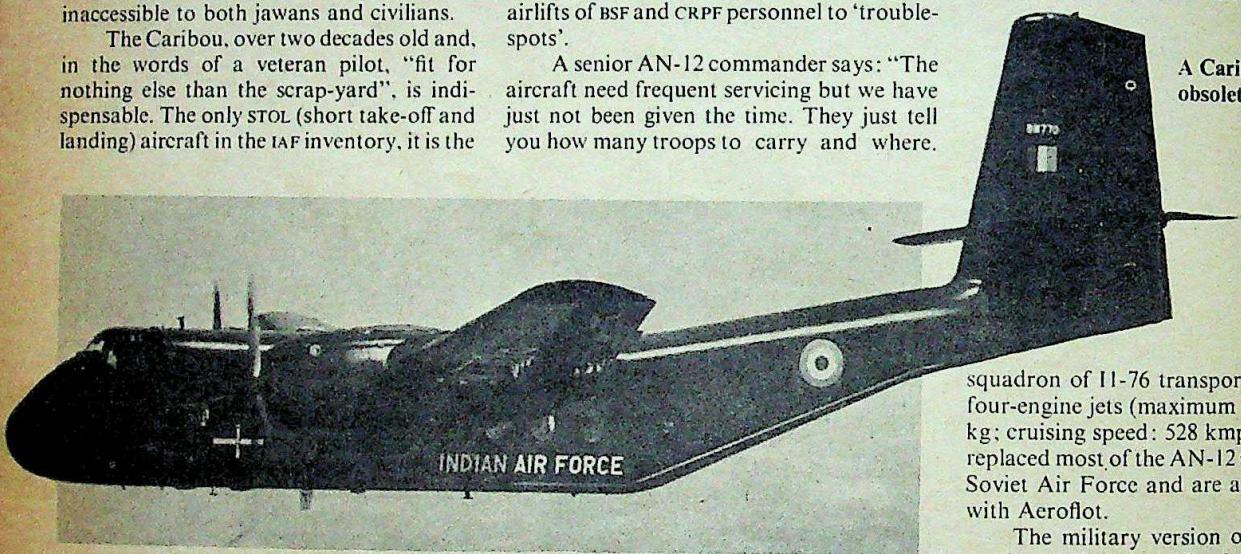
**I**N THE mad rush for fancy, ultra-modern combat aircraft the Government seems to have forgotten the obsolete, ageing transport squadrons of the Indian Air Force (IAF). Every day at the IAF's Gauhati airbase ground staff toil to make at least four or five of the 15 Caribous airworthy for the day's operations, by borrowing spare parts from the rest. The Caribous carry supplies and ensure communications in the far-flung mountains of Arunachal Pradesh, otherwise inaccessible to both jawans and civilians.

The Caribou, over two decades old and, in the words of a veteran pilot, "fit for nothing else than the scrap-yard", is indispensable. The only STOL (short take-off and landing) aircraft in the IAF inventory, it is the

and more likely than not it will be the end of the mission," says a young Dakota pilot.

While much has already been said of the "flying coffin" Fairchild Packets, the only reasonably adequate wing of the IAF transport fleet, the two AN-12 squadrons based at Chandigarh have suffered a tremendous decline in recent times, mainly due to the phenomenal amount of flying, defying all load and safety restrictions that they have been made to carry out in connection with the frequent airlifts of BSF and CRPF personnel to 'trouble-spots'.

A senior AN-12 commander says: "The aircraft need frequent servicing but we have just not been given the time. They just tell you how many troops to carry and where."



only one that can operate from the advance landing grounds in the eastern Himalayas. At no time is the IAF capable of putting more than five Caribous in the skies. These too fly at much less than their usual capabilities and, more important, at the expense of flight safety.

The story is repeated with minor variations at the more forward bases of the IAF. At both Jorhat and Chabua in Assam, for example, the IAF operates DC-3 Dakotas, each older than the squadron commander, a wing commander in rank. Most are of the 1936 vintage.

**Risky Flying:** Age has taken its toll and the one time work-horse is now a liability. In spite of frequent repairs and change of engines most Dakotas are not able to fly beyond 10,000 ft and maintain a reasonable radius of turn. While the height problem has been solved by training the pilots better to utilise the Dakota's remarkable manoeuvrability in flying through the valleys, the pilots dread the thought of engine failure. "We will probably still maintain height. But the increased radius of turn would make it impossible to negotiate the narrow valleys

The deadlines are becoming impossible with more and more aircraft losing efficiency."

At the moment the IAF is not in a position to fly at one time even six of the 30-odd aircraft that form the two squadrons. Overutilisation has frequently led to untimely wing-spar cracks and with the law and order situation in the country showing no signs of improvement pressure is only bound to increase. One reason why the IAF has been keen to buy the AN-32 for its short haul fleet is that the aircraft uses the same engine as the much bigger AN-12. This will mean indirect replacements for the existing fleet which has done much more than the prescribed hours.

**Little Concern:** Top-level sources blame the cavalier attitude to planning rather than to a shortage of funds for the state of affairs. Said one: "The Caribous should have been scrapped seven years back. And they very nearly were, but for a quirk of fate. The Government had bought four old Caribous through a Marwari broker in Switzerland in the early '70s but could never bring them to India because of some legal problems. The Government suddenly won the case when the Caribous in service were about to be

phased out and the IAF decided to cannibalise these four to make others operational. The problem with our planners is they only think of short-term economy." Besides high maintenance costs and the safety factor, making the old aircraft guzzle expensive aviation fuel.

While the Government has been dithering for over four years on the choice of light transport aircraft to replace the C-45s, Dakotas and Packets there are indications that at least the medium haul fleet is going to be strengthened shortly. High placed sources last fortnight confirmed that the Government had finally signed a deal with the Soviet Union for the supply of

A Caribou in flight; an obsolete species

squadron of Il-76 transport aircraft. These four-engine jets (maximum payload: 40 tonnes; cruising speed: 528 kmph) have already replaced most of the AN-12 squadrons of the Soviet Air Force and are also in operation with Aeroflot.

The military version of the Il-76 carries a tail-cannon like the AN-12 and has proved its worth in operations from high altitude airfields in Afghanistan and elsewhere. This is important for the IAF as the main burden of its ageing AN-12 squadrons at Chandigarh has been to carry supplies to troops in Ladakh.

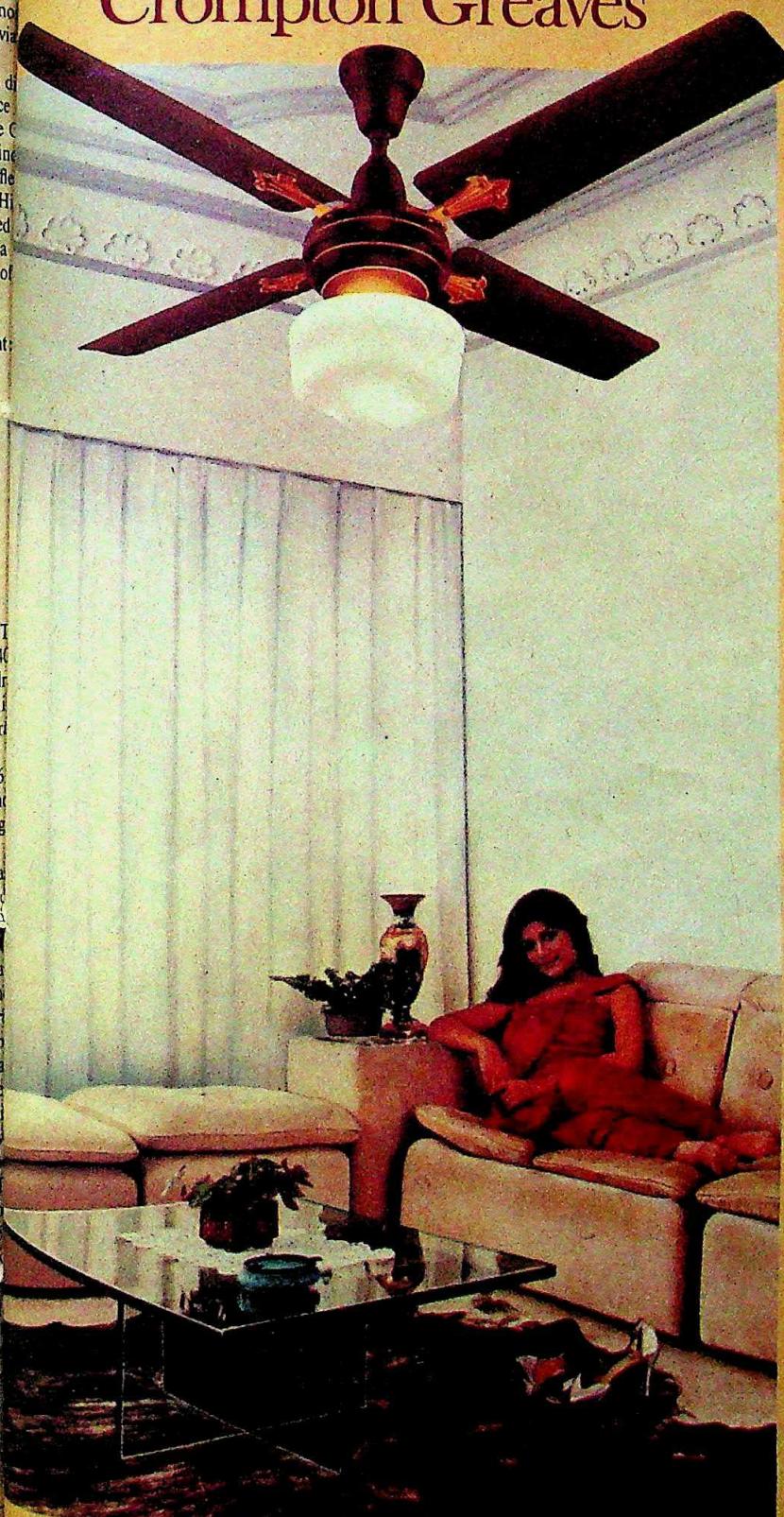
**Transport Plans:** However, even after the Government finalised the Il-76 deal, indications were that the talks with the Americans for the supply of C-130 Hercules transports, which are more or less in the same class as the AN-12s, were still on. At this rate the medium haul fleet is in for diversification.

But chances are that even when new aircraft arrive the IAF will continue to operate some AN-12s. Said a senior officer: "There is hardly any choice. The replacement of the entire transport fleet is inevitable and yet it is not possible because it costs so much." On the other hand, there does not seem to be a single aircraft that fulfills all the short haul requirements of the IAF. As the Government dithers in indecision there is an air of resigned despair about the way the IAF men continue to do the impossible every morning by launching the air these last surviving specimens of this near-extinct species."

SHEKHAR GUPTA

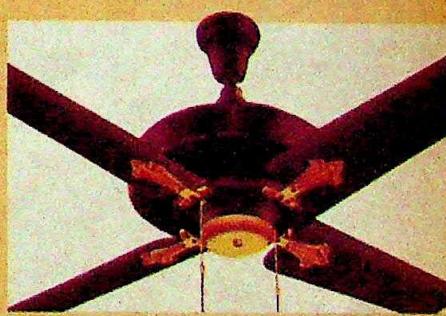
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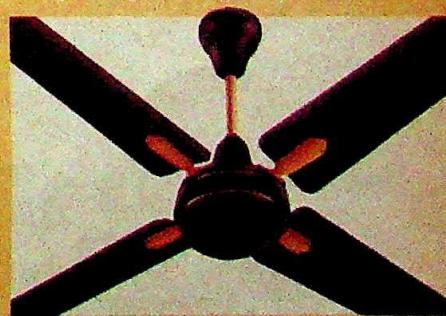
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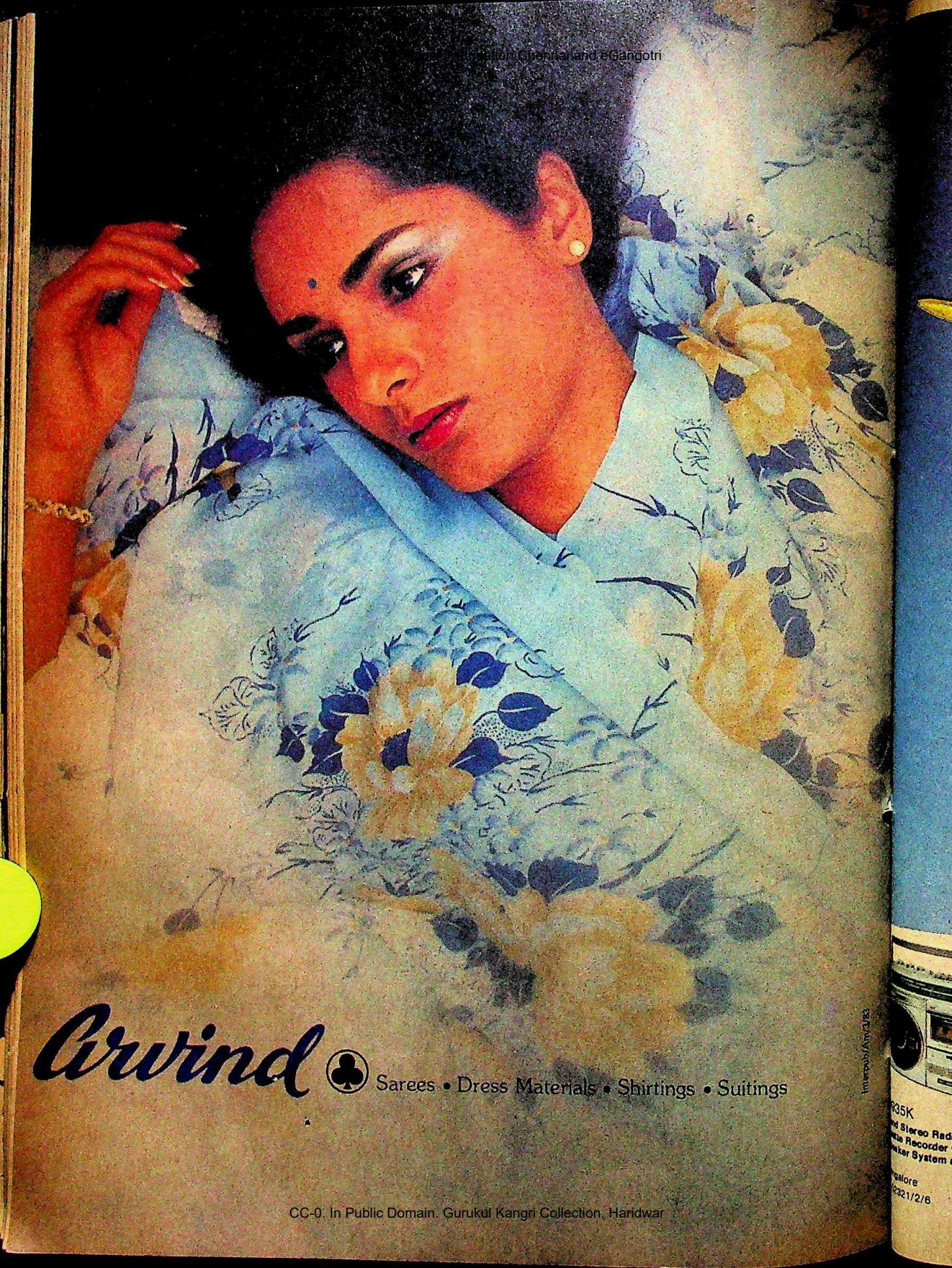
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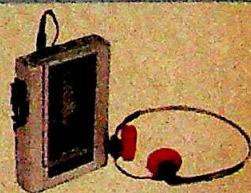
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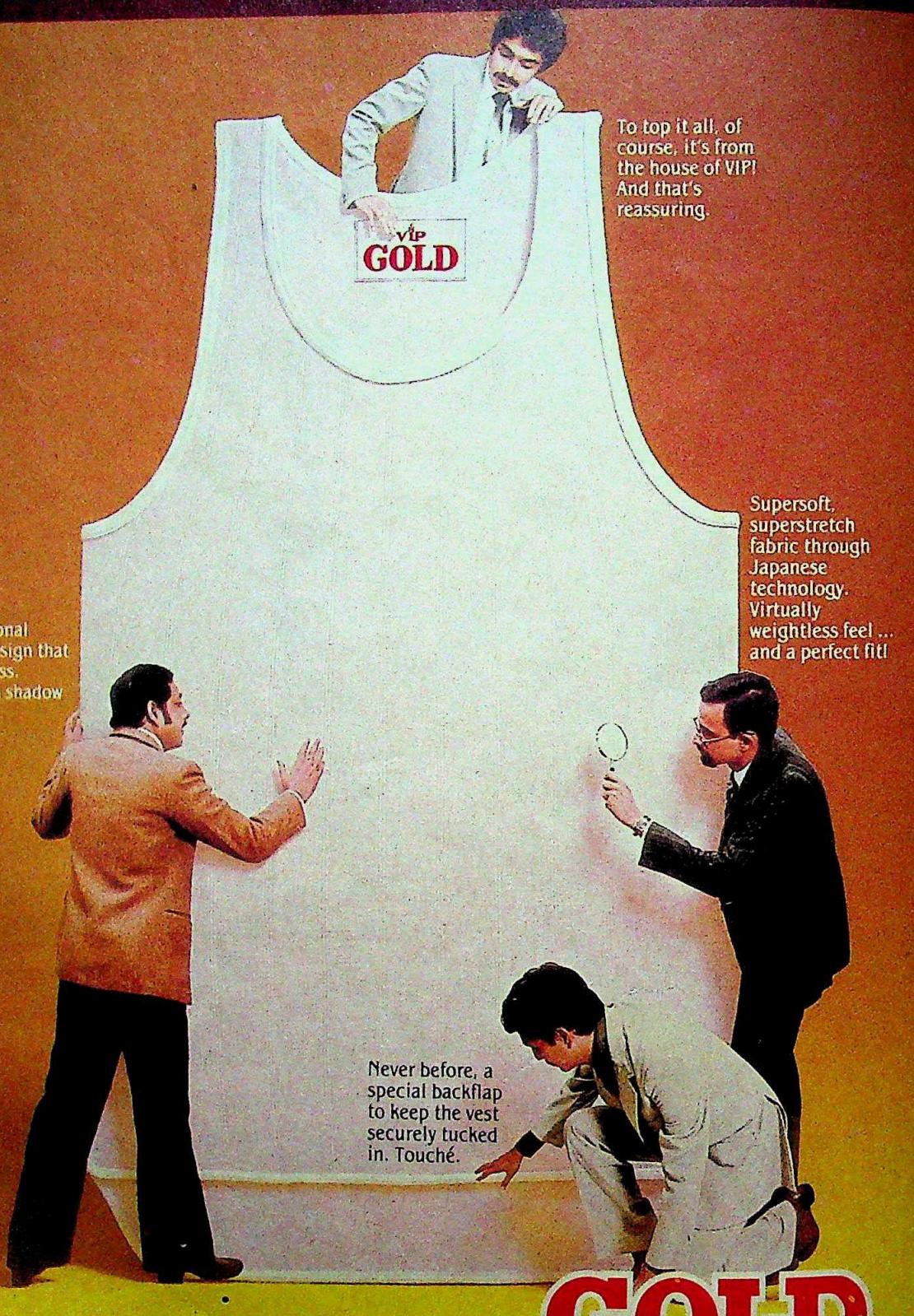
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# reading Malady

EVER there was a sorry mess, medical education in Bihar is in one. Five of the nine medical colleges in the state are yet to get recognition for their degrees from the Indian Medical Council (IMC). A high-level committee found only four of the 50-odd homoeopathic medical colleges fit for recognition. Central Council for Indian Systems of Medicine (CCISM) has served notices to de-recognise degrees of all ayurvedic colleges.

To cap it all, last month the Central Government specifically ruled that new institutions of the Indian systems of medicine and homoeopathy could be opened in the state.

The IMC and the Bihar Health Services Association (BHSAs) blame the Government and the Health Department for this crisis in medical education. Officials admit that against the 1,200 qualified allopath doctors and 20,000 qualified homoeopathic practitioners, there are about one lakh unregistered medical practitioners, 37,000 registered homoeopaths and about 10,000 'registered' medical practitioners besides numerous 'doctors' and 'surgeons'.

An IMC team had de-recognised five of Bihar's nine medical colleges effect from May 1, 1982 (INDIA, May 15, 1982). The five colleges—Nalanda Medical College, Patna Medical College, Gaya: Bhagalpur Medical College, Bhagalputra Medical College, Barauni, and S.K. Medical College, Muzaffarpur—had been found lacking in the basic facilities for teaching and training, and had over 103 teaching posts vacant. However, assurances given by the then health minister L.P. Singh and Health Commissioner V.S. Kishan had persuaded the IMC to give the colleges temporary and conditional recognition. Despite this, the Government has done nothing to improve the situation. At present, seven of the nine colleges have principals, the post of superintendent is vacant in eight, and till very recently the health service did not have a director. And last month, members of the BHSAs on mass casual leave for three days to pressure the Government to fill 2,219 of the posts lying vacant for the past decade.

**Organised Discipline:** Homoeopathic education appears to be in a greater state of disorder. Recently, a high-level committee set up by Bihar University found only four of the 50 colleges fit for recognition and affi-

liation. Of the others, the committee said, "the teaching and administration was in a confused and disorganised state", with many not having land, buildings, or an attached hospital. Bihar Health Directorate sources say that homoeopathic institutions have mushroomed in the last decade. The state Government, after the formulation of the Homoeopathy Act in 1953, had set up the

ranging from Rs 500 to Rs 1,000, receive a diploma or a degree and registration within a month. Alternatively, the candidate can enrol himself with any of the colleges, pay the fees and appear at the examinations in which his success has already been guaranteed. Candidates above a certain age can simply claim to have been practising before 1953, and be admitted automatically by the Bihar State Board of Homoeopathic Medicine.

Principals and others associated with homoeopathy education blame the Government for the current state of affairs. A principal said that no college has ever received any grants, as the University Grants Commission does not recognise homoeopathy. The amount of Rs 17,000 sanctioned by the Government last year was given only to two colleges, one got Rs 15,000 and the other, Rs 2,000.

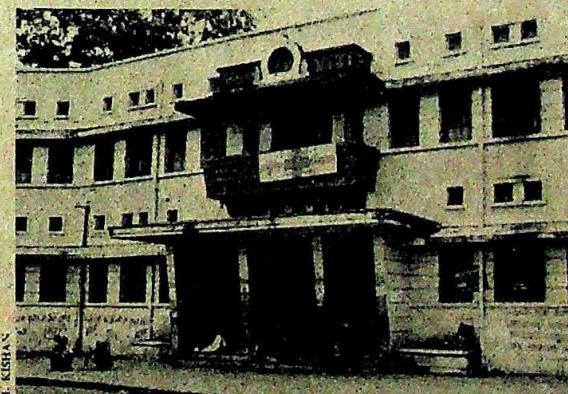
In the study of ayurvedic medicine, the situation is much worse. Informed sources say that the ISM has sent notices to the Government and the two universities—Bihar University and Kameshwari Singh Sanskrit University, Dharbanga—to the effect that the degree of Bachelor of Ayurvedic Medicine and Surgery of the colleges under them would be de-recognised if things did not improve. Bihar has three government ayurvedic colleges at Patna, Begusarai and Muzaffarpur. Even though private colleges are banned, nearly 25—some with affiliations with these two universities—are to be found all over the state. In the Patna Ayurvedic College, over 30 per cent of the teaching posts are vacant. In most colleges, the full course is never taught. As in the case of homoeopathy, numerous unrecognised agencies enrol and register students. Official estimates record over 30,000 vaidyas in addition to the unaccountable others who come from private colleges to practise. Then there are institutions which specialise in creating 'doctors' through a postal system, from offices in Patna and Kanpur.

Alarmed at the situation, the ninth joint conference of Central Councils of Health and Family Welfare asked the states to maintain utmost vigilance against unauthorised institutions awarding degrees, diplomas and certificates in the Indian systems of medicine and homoeopathy. The Bihar Government expresses itself helpless till it can employ the Bihar Homoeopathy System and Education (Control and Regulation) Act passed in April 1982 by the state legislature and now awaiting the President's assent. But for now, at least, medical education in the state seems to be languishing irremediably in ill-health.

—FARZAND AHMED



Bihar state Homoeopathy Board building: sorry mess



Patna Ayurvedic College: bleak scene

state board to standardise and register practitioners. In 1972, through an ordinance, all the existing 17 colleges had been transferred to the Bihar University. But in the last 10 years, the university has granted affiliation to 35 colleges, allegedly on the basis of donations, making a total of about 60 colleges in the state. Verendra Sharma, principal of the Patna Homoeopathic College and Hospital, estimated that about 10,000 students appear at examinations every year.

For many others, the process of becoming registered homoeopaths is much easier. In response to advertisements put out by various organisations, candidates fill out the prescribed forms, and after having paid sums

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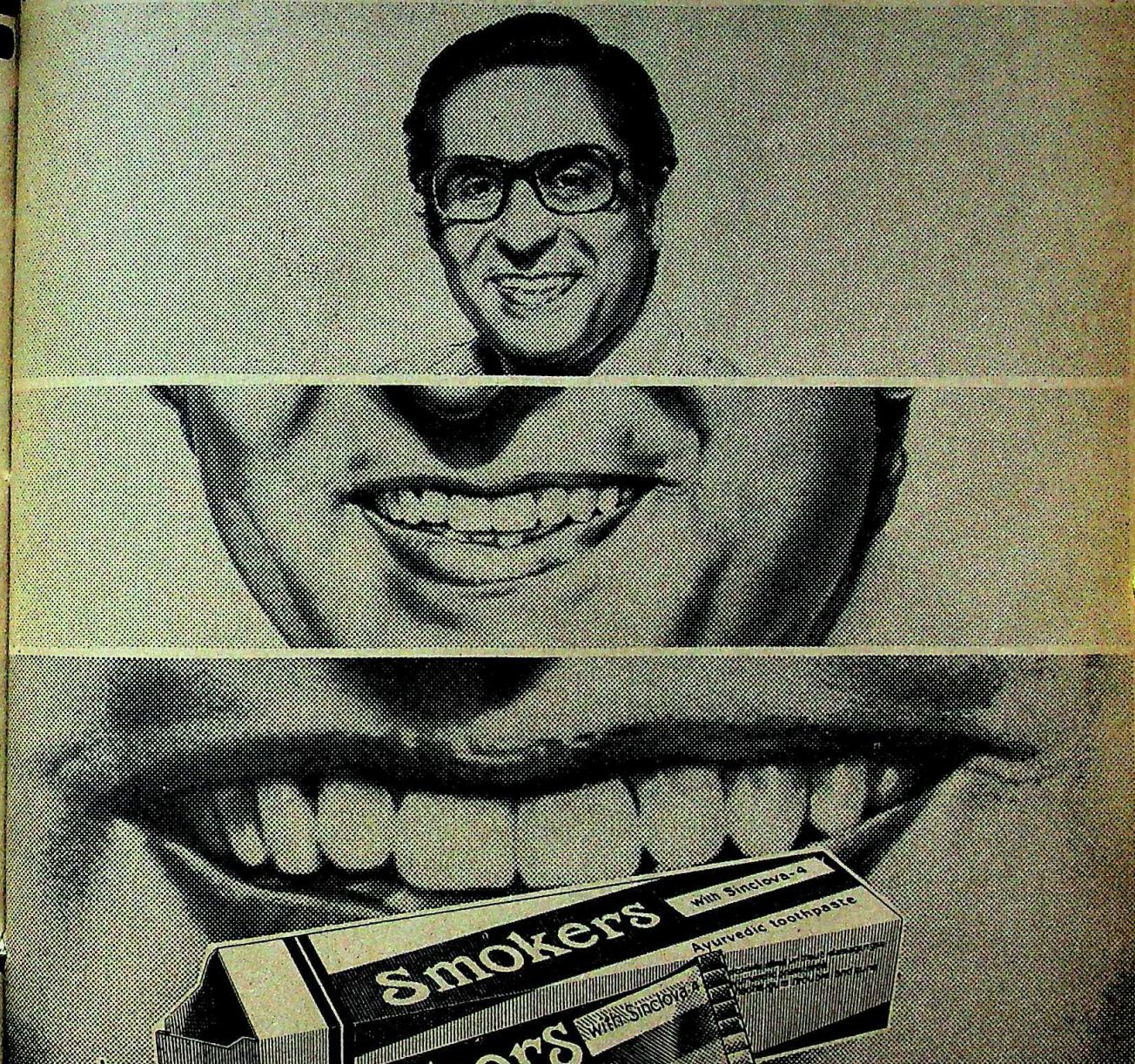
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KARNATAKA

# Crippling Scourge

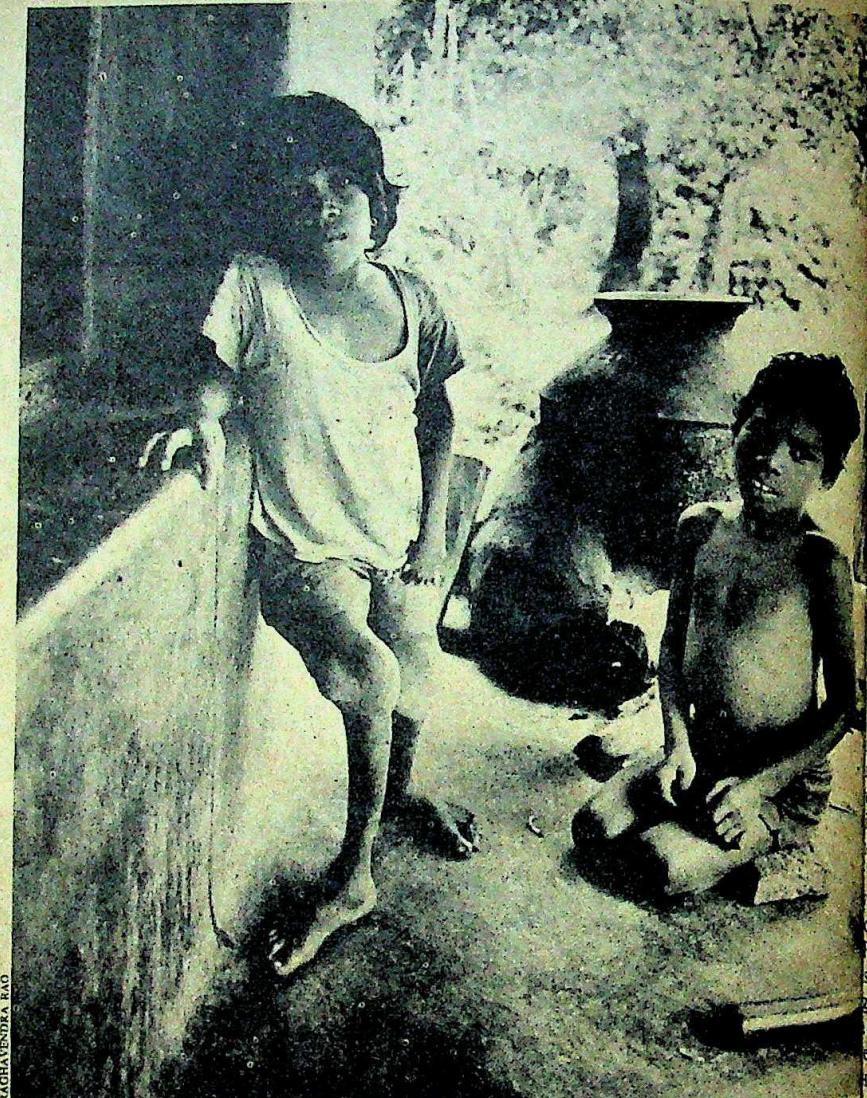
**G**IRIYAPPA, a 45-year-old Harijan living in Handigodu, a hamlet in the hilly Shimoga district of Karnataka, was considered the ablest man in his community. He used to lift heavy sacks of paddy with ease and worked harder than the rest in the fields. But today Giriyappa is crippled. His muscular body has become emaciated and his sturdy limbs have wasted away. He is confined to his one-room hut, condemned to crawl around for the rest of his life.

Giriyappa's troubles began in 1975 when he suddenly developed pain in his lower limb joints which increased rapidly till it crippled him. He was not the only one in his village to suffer that year. Thirty others, including women and children, were afflicted with the ailment that left them in various stages of disability. Specialists called to treat them could not diagnose their affliction.

Eight years later, after five expert teams have made extensive studies of the disease, it still remains a mystery to medical science. Meanwhile, it has affected 290 people and has spread to 32 villages including eight in neighbouring Chickmagalur district. Last month, a team of scientists from the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), New Delhi, headed by Director-General V. Ramalingaswami, visited the affected villages and has proposed to set up a special research unit in Sagar, the taluk headquarters of Handigodu.

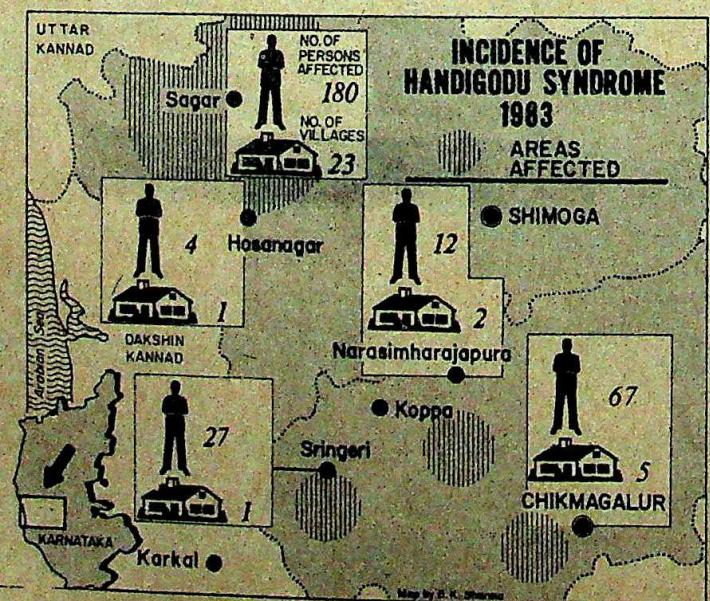
**Mysterious Spread:** Called Handigodu Syndrome, after the village where it first broke out, the disease has been spreading with crippling intensity, not sparing women and children and in many instances afflicting entire families. A common feature is that it has struck mainly the lower socio-economic groups like the Harijans, Idigas and Gowdas, leaving the more prosperous Lingayats and Brahmins untouched. In Handigodu (population: 281) out of the 23 Harijan families, 17 have fallen victim, involving a total of 38 persons.

In all the villages where the disease has struck, it is mainly the breadwinners of the family who have been affected. In



RAGHAVENDRA RAO

A child affected by the disease: devastating affliction



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in 1975, Giriyappa feet at a 3 as a says: "V can hardi Her two chi amappa, 7. Both e school ne time at h other chour's son muscles have grotesque inuaed sch While the dite these villency to spre is extensive been of no drashekhan s: "The vil doctors. want to un help them assured Gir an opera ty, he woul help of cru "I have su the opera condition." Puzzling S se first bight it was a team from ental Health ANS), Ban study fro that the s weeks to f which the dis The first sy joints of t logical stu ps, knees a in many c lose the ca hat: "These any primar he problem paedics." The NIMHA ed by exte Sixty-two other patients h also been granted pension by the Government. Almost all vicitms have stopped workin Sanamma, 35, who caught the disease however, on

in 1975, is not as badly crippled as Giriyappa but she can barely stand at a stretch. She used to walk 3 as a labourer earlier; but now says: "Who will give me work? I can hardly cook my own food. Pain is terrible. I can't move at all."

Her two children, Manjappa, 13, and Sanamma, 7, have also caught the disease. Both of them attend the school nearby but spend most of their time at home, unable to play with other children. Sanamma's father's son, Nagaraj, 13, whose muscles have withered leaving his bones grotesquely deformed, has discontinued school and now tends

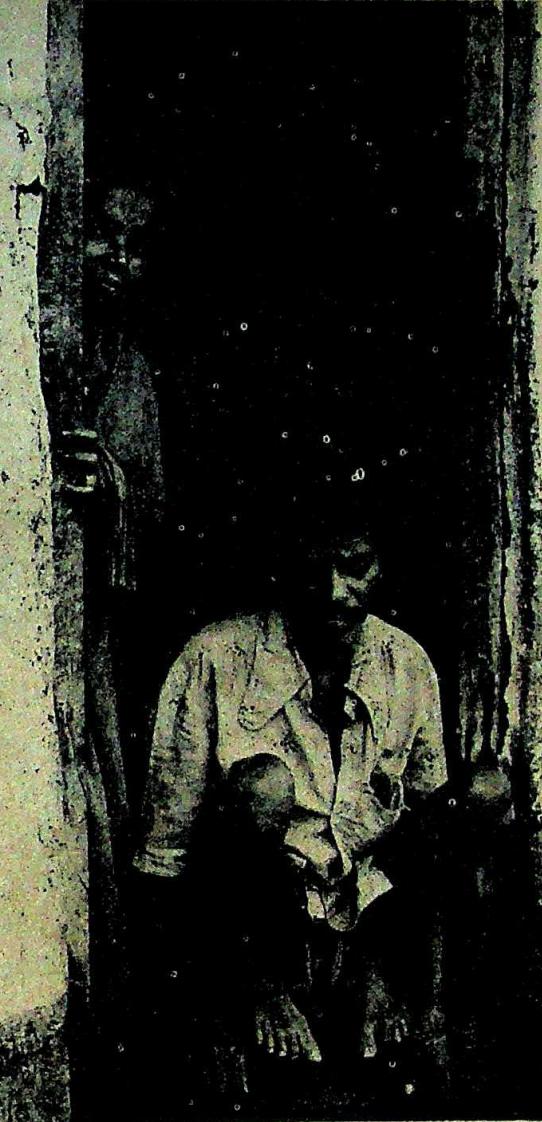
While the disease continues to devastate these villages and has shown a tendency to spread to the surrounding areas, extensive studies by specialists have been of no avail. In fact, H.M. Sudarshakar, a village elder comments: "The villagers have begun to visit doctors. Many of them don't want to undergo operations that may help them recover." Doctors assured Giriyappa that if he underwent an operation to correct his deformity, he would be able to walk with the help of crutches. But the victim said, "I have suffered enough, and I feel the operation will not change my condition."

**Puzzling Symptoms:** When the disease first broke out, doctors thought it was a neurological disorder. A team from the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS), Bangalore, made an initial study from April 1975. They found that the symptoms lasted from two weeks to four years and the age at which the disease set in varied from 4-41.

The first symptom was a nagging ache in the joints of the lower limbs or the back. Extensive studies showed severe lesions in hips, knees and wrists, causing total disability in many cases. The team could not determine the cause of the disease but concluded that: "These patients were not suffering from any primary neurological disorder and the problem was mainly in the field of Paediatrics."

The NIMHANS study was immediately followed by extensive research by the National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) Hyderabad. It noted a very high degree of incidence among the affected families. No pets working animals or household pets were affected by the disease. However, once the team went ahead and

RAHAYENDRA RAO



Giriyappa and wife Subbamma: economic problems

studied the nutritional habits they made some startling revelations. They found that while the staple diet in the area was rice, supplemented with dal, vegetables and milk products, the Vokkaligas, Idigas and Harijans—the communities affected most—also ate meat, fish and occasionally crabs, apart from wild roots and tubers. These communities, who work mainly as farm labourers, used to get their meals from their landlords, but this practice was discontinued a decade ago. Instead they started cooking most of their meals at home and their consumption of fish and crabs caught in the fields has increased tremendously.

**Toxic Risk:** This was coupled with the introduction of pesticides to get more high-yielding crops. Following the spraying of pesticides, there was mass mortality of fauna in the area and villagers saw dead fish and

crabs floating on the fields. Villagers said they did not catch fish or crabs from the fields for at least three days after spraying, but the team found that the meat-eating villagers were exposed to the risk of ingesting residual pesticides through these food chains.

The team gave the disease a new name: "Endemic Familial Arthritis of Malnad" (EFAM), and pointed out that there is evidence elsewhere in the world that chemical toxins can cause bone diseases if consumed through food. In Japan, for instance, in 1979 a similar disease was noticed in people who consumed crabs which had accumulated large amounts of cadmium from the nearby Zinzu river which was polluted by industrial effluents.

In its report, the NIN team came to the conclusion that "The outbreak of the disease seemed to have been preceded by changes in the micro-ecology of the area." It said a chain of events such as the increased use of pesticides, pollution of rice fields with pesticide residues, and a possible accumulation of the pesticides by crabs and other fauna of the area had been observed there. They added cautiously: "There is an indication that pesticide residues could have entered the human system through this food. This needs further study."

**Scepticism:** State health officials have dismissed the NIN report as "hypothetical" and T.M. Ramesh, joint director, health, says: "We cannot ask the Agricultural Department to ban the use of pesticides till we have definite evidence of the link between pesticides and the disease."

In April this year the state Government set up a special team of experts which could not find the cause of the disease but suggested that because more than one member in each family was affected, "this may indicate either a genetic pre-disposition or a common environmental factor". The state Health Department has proposed that the Government set up a special team to treat the patients. It is expected to cost Rs 3.17 lakh.

While specialists have been theorising that the disease could be caused by toxic pesticides or even genetic factors, the affected villagers have got their own theory—that an evil spirit had cast a spell over them. In Handigodu, the people called a *mantravadi* to exorcise the village. Several chickens were sacrificed and the local deity was worshipped at an expense of Rs 600 collected from the affected families. But to no avail. As Giriyappa mournfully says: "What can be done? Life must go on despite our sickness."

—RAJ CHENGAPPA in Handigodu

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## GREEN SIGNAL

**H**INDUSTAN Motors has got the crucial clearance for the expansion of its car manufacturing capacity from 30,000 to 50,000 annually. Simultaneously, the company has been able to get its truck manufacturing licence increased from 15,000 to 30,000. With the foreign collaboration clearances already obtained for producing a new model car, fitted with a Vauxhall body and an Isuzu engine, the only road-block left is the reduction of customs duty that will make the new cars available at an affordable price. Meanwhile, the company has also tied up with Isuzu for a new range of trucks, which will be manufactured at a new plant to be set up in Gujarat. Part of the car production will be based in Madhya Pradesh, signalling a clear move away from West Bengal, where the company has based its manufacturing operations so far.

## OF GLOOM

LEAK times have hit the cigarette industry, with both sales and production plummeting from month to month after the repeated hikes in prices since last December. Among the cigarette companies, Golden Tobacco is estimated to have suffered a production loss of 16 per cent in May this year, compared to 9 per cent in 1982, while National Tobacco has seen production drop by a 10 per cent. Similarly, Godfrey Phillips has lost 21 per cent, and Sultan 8 per cent. ITC, the market leader, saw production at its factory in Bangalore drop by 30 per cent, while the second factory, at Saharanpur in Uttar Pradesh, saw a more manageable drop of 8 per cent.

Trouble is brewing on other fronts too. Cigarette dealers, whose margins have been cut by the manufacturers in the effort to bring prices down and save indirectly on taxes, are now getting together to exercise pressure for the restoration of the old margins. If this leads to a further increase in prices, demand could drop still further.

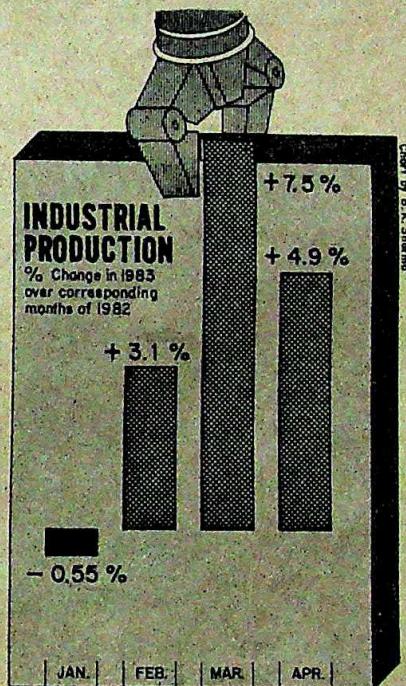
## ARAB CONNECTION

ARAB investment may flow into the country in a big way if the negotiations between the Pradeshiya Industrial and Investment Corporation of Uttar Pradesh (PICUP) and financiers from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) yield results. PICUP has recently awarded one of the six gas-based fertiliser plants to be set up in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan; and given the choice of domestic parties with whom to tie up financing arrangements for the Rs 600 crore project, negotiations are being conducted with Arab parties.

## RAMME FOR GROWTH

THE TELEVISION industry is likely to become the country's single largest consumer durable industry in the next couple of years, producing goods worth Rs 800 crore a year — more than radios, two-wheelers, refrigerators, music systems or cars. Demand for TV sets, both colour as well as black and white, is expected to shoot up from last year's level of 0.65 million to around 1.5 million sets annually in a couple of years. In anticipation of the boom, over two dozen applicants are permitted to set up production capacities for colour TV sets, which will be the main growth area. Weston Electroniks is expected to be the biggest licensee, with a total capacity of 2.5 lakh colour sets, while a dozen others are expected to be sanctioned capacities of one lakh each. The remaining applicants will be sanctioned smaller capacities. Peico Electronics (Philips) has however been granted a licence, even though the company had offered to export a major part of its production. Reason: the licensing policy of foreign equity companies.

## BETTER TIMES AHEAD



**T**HE INDUSTRIAL recovery evident in March appears to have been sustained through April, with the official industrial production index registering a growth of 4.9 per cent in comparison with April 1982. Growth in January had been negative, and in February only 3.1 per cent, before March recorded a handsome 7.5 per cent increase over March 1982 and signalled the long-awaited upturn. With Bombay's textile industry back on stream, and many recession-hit engineering industries beginning to experience better times, the subsequent months too should have registered reasonable rates of growth.

## TAKE-OVER TROUBLE

**T**HE TAKE-OVER by ITC of Ashok Paper Mills, the sick unit with factories in Bihar and Assam, has run into trouble, with the cigarette giant insisting on a package of financial incentives as a pre-condition for the take-over. The financial package that has been proposed includes a partial write-off of the paper company's accumulated financial burdens, concessions on excise duty and sales tax, and a commitment of further institutional loans. Without these forthcoming, ITC may refuse to take responsibility for the unit, which has accumulated losses of almost Rs 40 crore.

This could lead to a piquant situation, since the Ashok Paper take-over was a part of the composite deal involving ITC's acquisition of India Cements. The Company Law Board recently cleared the India Cements share acquisition, but the financial institutions, who sold ITC the shares, may not invite ITC on to the cement company's board unless the Ashok Paper tangle is sorted out. ITC, meanwhile, is now arguing that the two take-overs should be treated as separate issues and not as one composite transaction. The institutions have so far refused to play ball, although ITC with control of 32 per cent of India Cements equity could dictate terms if it chose to.

PLANNING

# Drag On Development



"IN 1958, every rupee invested in government enterprises yielded an average of 13 paise; in 1965, it was 8 paise. For private industry, the corresponding figures were 26 paise and 35 paise. Hence, the 'yield gap' between the private and the public sectors doubled from 13 per cent in 1958 to 27 per cent in 1965."

"From a hundred rupees invested in private enterprises the country could have earned Rs 27 more than from the same amount invested in government enterprises. So much money is going down the drain every year."

I wrote this 15 years ago and, as far as I can see, things have not changed much since then. Investment in government enterprises now amounts to over Rs 25,000 crore which means that something like Rs 7,000 crore is going down the drain every year. The Government says that the paper losses in public sector undertakings are only a few hundred crore. This is not quite correct. The 'real' losses are much higher—possibly ten times as high—and constitute a serious drain on the national economy.

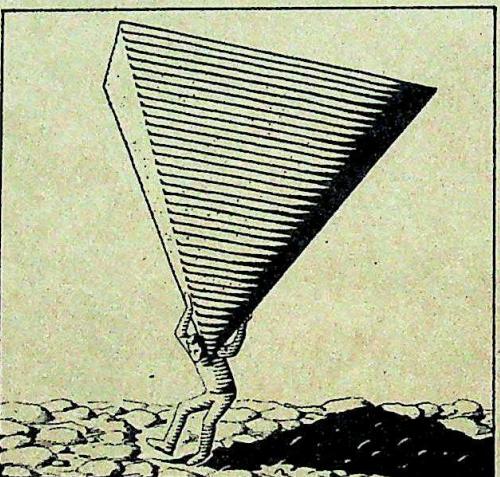
But we know all this, you might say. Do we, really? And do we know the connection between the vast inefficiency of the public sector and the present parlous condition of the Indian economy?

I have a feeling that we don't. We think in compartments and believe that the public and the private sectors operate independently of each other, and while the public sector losses may be mounting, we are led to believe that they are an inevitable part of the 'social' cost of development. It is not clear why a poor country should be forced to pay such a heavy cost in the name of development, so heavy that the country is apparently condemned to perpetual poverty. A process of development that wastes resources in the name of social cost—it should do precisely the opposite, for real development creates resources instead of wasting them—is anti-social and doomed from the start.

**Blunt Industrialist:** I came across the above quotation of mine in the recently published autobiography of Shantanu Laxman Kirloskar, the head of the Kirloskar group. Kirloskar carries his private sector ideology so far, for the autobiography, *Cactus and Thorns*, almost certainly the first such effort by an Indian businessman, has been published privately. This is a pity, for Kirloskar is that rare bird among businessmen, a man

who has no hesitation in calling a spade a spade and sometimes, to the embarrassment of his government and business friends, a bloody hatchet. Although he doesn't look it, Kirloskar turned 80 this year—he was born only nine years after G.D. Birla—but he has lost none of his sting and the book which is obviously his own work and not a ghost-written job, is a delight.

Kirloskar is an engineer, not an economist, and none the worse for it. He joined his father's business—a small factory making farm implements and machinery—on his



return from MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) and turned it into what it is today, one of the largest engineering groups in the country. When he started work in 1926, the company's turnover was Rs 3 lakh a year. Fifty years later, he had seen it grow into a big complex with a turnover of over Rs 500 crore a year. The growth came initially from oil engines, which Kirloskars began making just after independence—and they were doing pretty well, when tragedy struck.

"From 1949 the demand for our engines had been steadily rising," writes Kirloskar, "and by 1950 we had pushed our production to 12 engines per working day. We marched ahead and by the latter half of 1950 we were making preparations to turn out 10,000 engines a year. And then, from February 1952 the offtake of engines sharply declined.

"Searching for the reason, I found that it was an error of judgement by the Planning Commission which had brought disaster upon our indigenous manufacturers. Possessing no experience of assessing market demand through market outlets, the Com-

mission had overestimated the requirement and recommended that about 35,000 engines be imported from abroad to satisfy 'immediate needs' of farmers. Relying on estimate of the Planning Commission, importers lost no time in bringing into large numbers of foreign-made engines of various qualities and makes, from the sale of which they expected quick and ample profits.

**Administrative Inefficiency:** Kirloskar rushed from ministry to ministry explaining the position, until he found that the Maharashtra Government would advance a company some money (Rs 4 lakh) against the supply of some engines. Let him tell his own story:

"The state Assembly was in session in Poona and I went to see concerned minister and other authorities. Outside his office, I was asked to wait. I looked around for a chair to sit on. There was no chair, not even a bench, and some time I was left to stand. Presently a peon noticed me but he too was unable to find a chair. At last, I noticed a wooden packing case beside the door and sat on it, carefully avoiding the nails. As hours ticked by, I grew impatient, especially when I noticed the calm and unruffled manner in which the office work was being done.

"After two-and-a-half hours, he called in, asked to sign some papers, given the cheque, with which I rushed to my office. My colleagues felt indignant at the way I was made to sit on a wooden packing case for two-and-a-half hours, but I said, 'It was easy. Let us say I borrowed at the rate of 1,60,000 an hour. Check with the man; he would lend more at this rate; I am willing to sit on that packing case as long as it is necessary for more advances!'"

It is not clear whether it was this singular series of experiences that soured once for all against all forms of central planning and its offshoot, the public sector. "In my opinion," he says, "the whole idea of the Nehru government and subsequently other governments in starting the five-year plans was more political than economic. Even the individuals who were appointed as deputy-chairmen followed others in looking at the political side of planning rather than the economic side. They were more anxious to achieve an egalitarian society, in pursuit of which they saw the flattening of private incomes and the stopping of the bigger industries, bigger institutions and bigger organisations as more important than raising

employment and production and helping industrial progress."

**Political Exigencies:** "Mr Nehru and his colleagues were shrewd politicians who saw the advantage of concentrating political power in the hands of the politicians in the Central Government. The business also supported them, with the result that after some ten years we find the economic system cluttered up with controls and regulations, which are rendering it almost impossible to permit creative activity to help the economy." We can also see how, during the war and again at the time of elections, various controls were brought in to raise money which, as the experience of Kirloskar has shown, is collected through these controls and never accounted for by the politicians."

These are strong words, strong for a businessman, that is, though we have been writing in the same vein. Kirloskar is even more scathing. The Planning Commission men, he says, as he calls them: "In an emerging society, politicians and technical advisers—pandits as I like to call them—generally go together. Many of our pandits in Yojana give greater weight to the pet projects of their bosses, that is, politicians, than their own accumulated knowledge. A pandit likes to hover on the periphery of political limelight, to lend political catchwords and slogans, to impress academic terminology and make a concoction sound like a nectar which he then passes on as a nectar. But such men in high position or in lofty administrative seats take concern for subjecting their ideas to tests to ascertain their validity. I said, 'I already described how men whose age seemed to extend no further than 2 added to 2, had forecast our long as 2 years of diesel engines in 1952 and so on.'"

"It was this anxiety of workers in the industry,"

KIRLOSKAR became the president of FICCI around the time the Fourth Five-Year Plan was being prepared under Mehta, then Mrs Gandhi's blue-boy. Kirloskar took one look at the presidential address that was prepared by the FICCI flunkies and threw it rather than wrote his own speech—an unusual move for a businessman—and ran headlong into controversy with the mandarins of private Government and, of course, their bigger bosses. He told the Planning Commission that "democracy, as we popularly understand it, cannot coexist with planning; alter-

natively, planning cannot be done in a democratic set-up." Four years later, Asoka Mehta was out of the Government and five years later, he was in jail, along with thousands of others during the Emergency.

The entire philosophy of planning centres round the idea that a country is poor because it has few resources. The purpose of control is rationalised as judicious use of these 'scarce resources' for which control on production is said to be necessary. Actually, there is no such thing as 'scarce' resources. Resources need dynamic effort, and additional development creates additional resources. Any undue control on resources inhibits development and lack of development results in lack of resources.

**Faulty Planning:** Because resources are assumed to be 'scarce', there is a tendency to

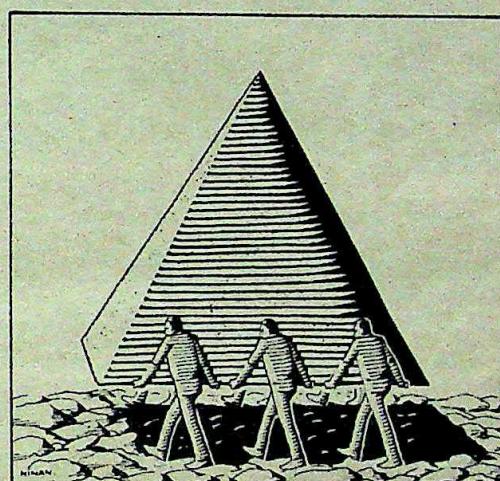
but whether it can function in any other way as long as we have the present model of highly centralised and government-oriented planning. The purpose of the public sector in India is not growth but control of the economy through that sector, everything else being secondary. As long as we have centralised planning with a built-in commanding heights bias for the public sector, we cannot avoid the Government operating, or rather mis-operating a large slice of the economy for us. And as long as we have a heavy government presence in the economy, from steel to cables, and from machine tools to watches, we cannot avoid inefficiency and aborted growth.

**Excessive Centralisation:** When I first met Kirloskar about 15 years ago, I thought that while there was a great deal of substance in his hostility, even then quite marked and vocal, to the role of the Government in economic activity, it would not be fair to throw out the baby with the bathwater by jettisoning Central planning altogether. We were of course thinking in compartments, treating the public sector as if it was an independent activity totally unconnected with the planning model. I must confess that Kirloskar had been right all along and I have been wrong. The public sector is a creature of the Plans and it will continue to be a drag on our development, making us more or less perpetually dependent on foreign aid and other outside resources, as long as we persist in Central planning.

Unless therefore we curtail substantially the scope of planning, beginning with the trimming of the powers of the Planning Commission itself, I, for one, cannot see how things can improve. Kirloskar thinks that the Planning Commission should be abolished. I support him, but let us do it gradually, say, in about five years' time.

The commission is socially and economically unnecessary, and politically dangerous, as some of the states are now finding. In fact, social and economic planning is in the Concurrent List, not Central List, under the Constitution, though the Centre seems to have appropriated it almost totally without so much as a by your leave.

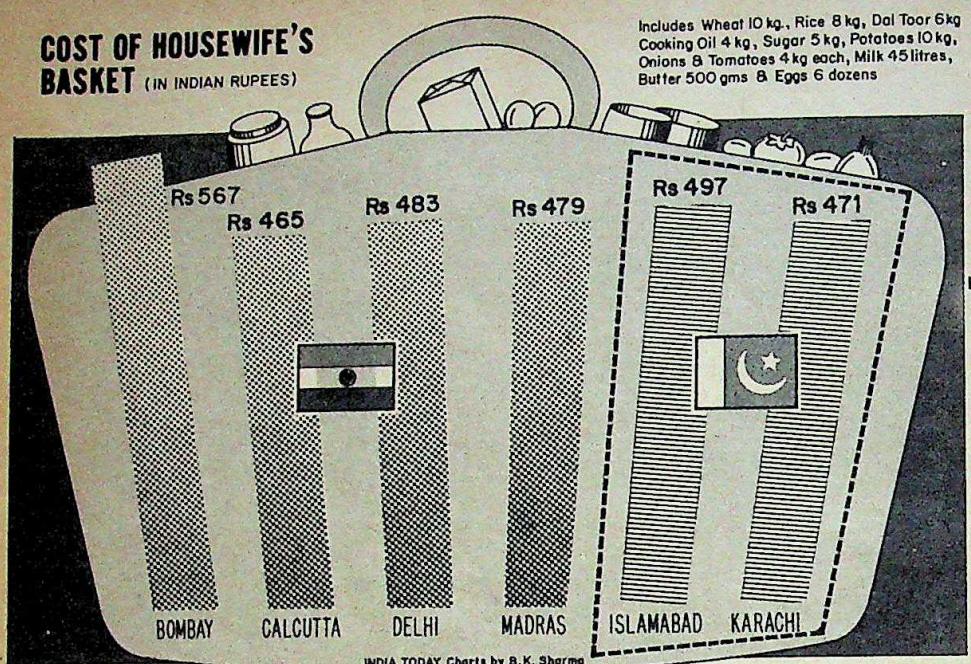
Incidentally, did Kirloskar's company suffer on account of his bluntness? "In fairness, I must record," he says, "that we rarely suffered; if anything, I was often favoured with preferential treatment and treated with a certain respect. If my business suffered at all, it was from our refusal to stoop to the unethical practices which the system of licences and permits encourages so strongly." All's well, I suppose, that ends well.



allocate the bulk of whatever resources are available to the public sector since this sector is the kingpin of the 'commanding heights' syndrome. Go to any government official working in the Finance Ministry or in Yojana Bhavan and you will find that he is concerned not so much with how the public sector is doing but how much money it is getting. A plan of Rs 100,000 crore is considered a better plan than a plan of Rs 75,000 crore, even though—or possibly because—the bigger plan may leave that much less money to the more efficient private sector. Centralised planning of the type we have adopted since the days of Mahalonobis has thus created a vicious circle. A big plan means a bigger public sector which, in turn, means a smaller private sector and therefore slower growth which, in turn, means scarcer resources. This type of planning is thus tailor-made not for growth but for stagnation, which is precisely what we have. We have stagnation not only in growth but also in raising the necessary resources for growth.

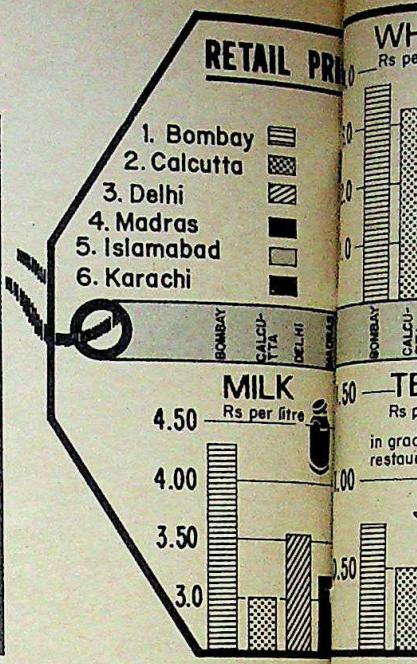
The question therefore is not whether the public sector functions efficiently or not,

**COST OF HOUSEWIFE'S  
BASKET (IN INDIAN RUPEES)**



Includes Wheat 10 kg., Rice 8 kg., Dal Toor 6 kg.  
Cooking Oil 4 kg., Sugar 5 kg., Potatoes 10 kg.,  
Onions & Tomatoes 4 kg each, Milk 45 litres,  
Butter 500 gms & Eggs 6 dozens

**RETAIL PR**

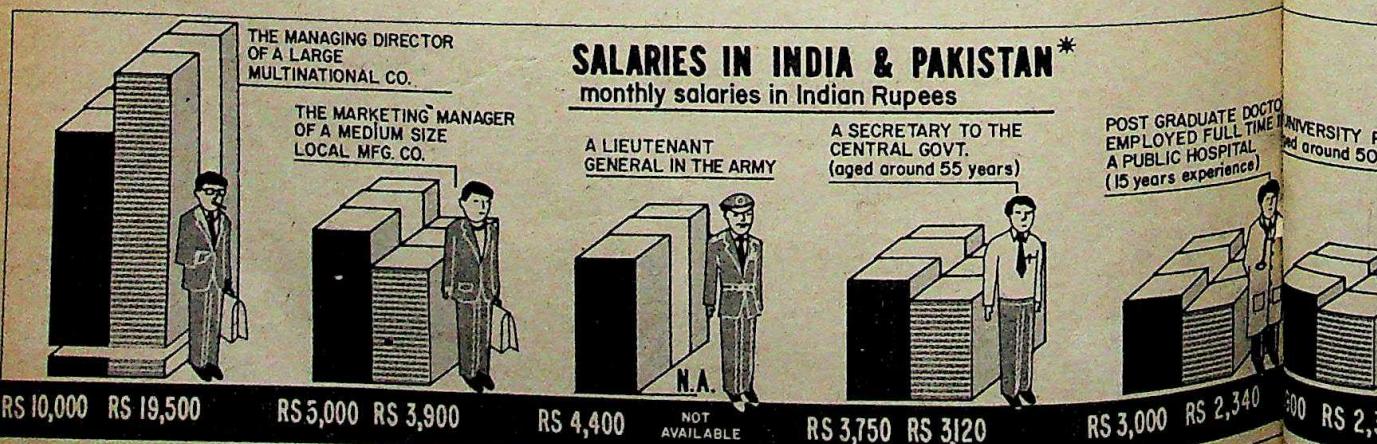


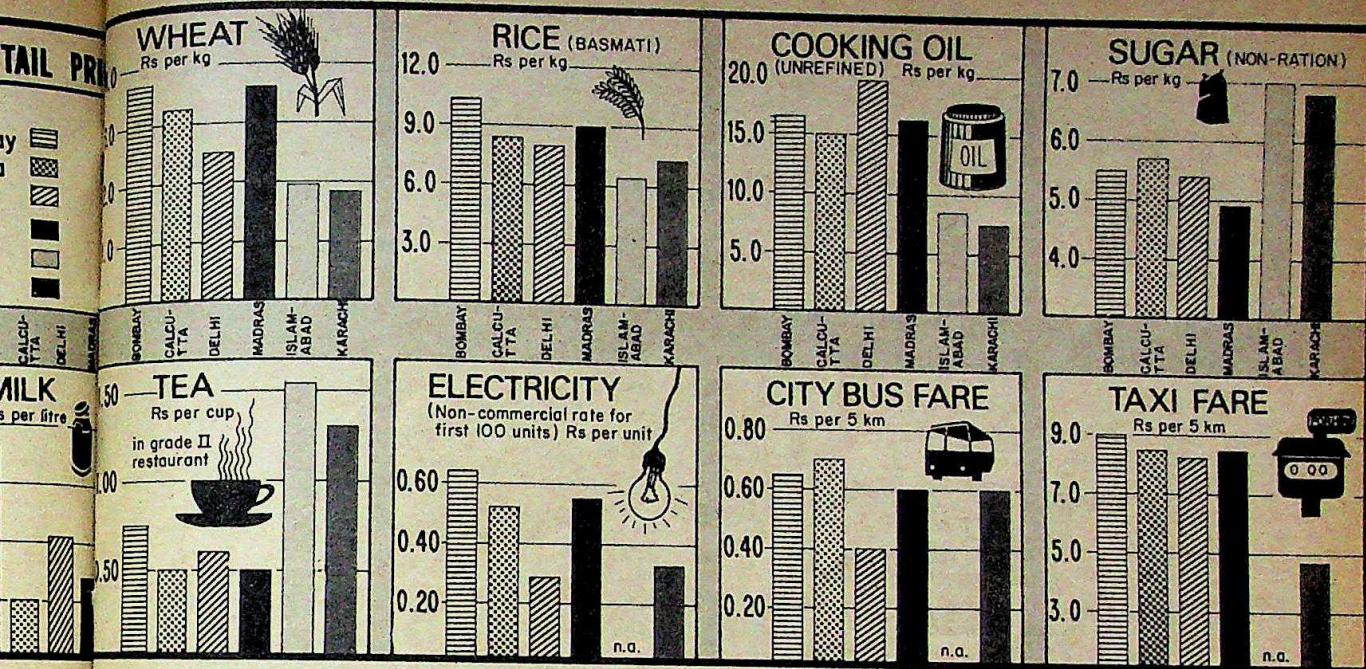
INDIA TODAY-MARG SURVEY

## The Subcontinental Divide

INDIA TODAY commissioned the Marketing And Research Group Private Ltd (MARG) an independent market and social research organisation, to carry out a survey in Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi and Madras to investigate differences in the prices of various food items and public utilities. Comparable figures were also obtained for Karachi and Islamabad (converted into Indian rupees at the rate of Pak Re 1 = Indian Re 0.78). These figures were obtained through MARG's associates in Pakistan. In each city all prices were obtained from three markets and then averaged.

MARG and their associates also collected estimates of salaries and wages earned by sons in various positions (ranging from a secretary in the Central Government to a peon) in India and Pakistan.





### Prices of foodstuffs and utilities

In general, the two Pakistani cities are cheaper than Indian cities as far as wheat, dal and cooking oil are concerned. In fact, cooking oil in Pakistan for around half Indian price. Vegetables—potatoes, onions and tomatoes are also generally cheaper in Pakistan. On the other hand, dairy products, as milk, butter and eggs are more expensive. It is also expensive to drink tea in a restaurant or to go to a cinema in Pakistan. As far as public utility rates concerned, Karachi (figures for Islamabad are not available) is cheaper than the four

Indian cities for electricity and for travel on trams, buses and in taxis.

### The Housewife Basket

Looking across the prices in the six cities, it seems quite clear that Bombay is the most expensive city. Between the Pakistani cities, prices are somewhat higher in Islamabad than in Karachi.

To get an indication of the relative cost of day-to-day living among middle and upper income group households, MARG constructed an index termed the 'Housewife Basket'. The basket included major items of provisions, vegetables and dairy products. Mutton has been excluded because some

cities are predominantly fish-eating or vegetarian and the inclusion of mutton might distort the value of the MARG Housewife Basket in those cities.

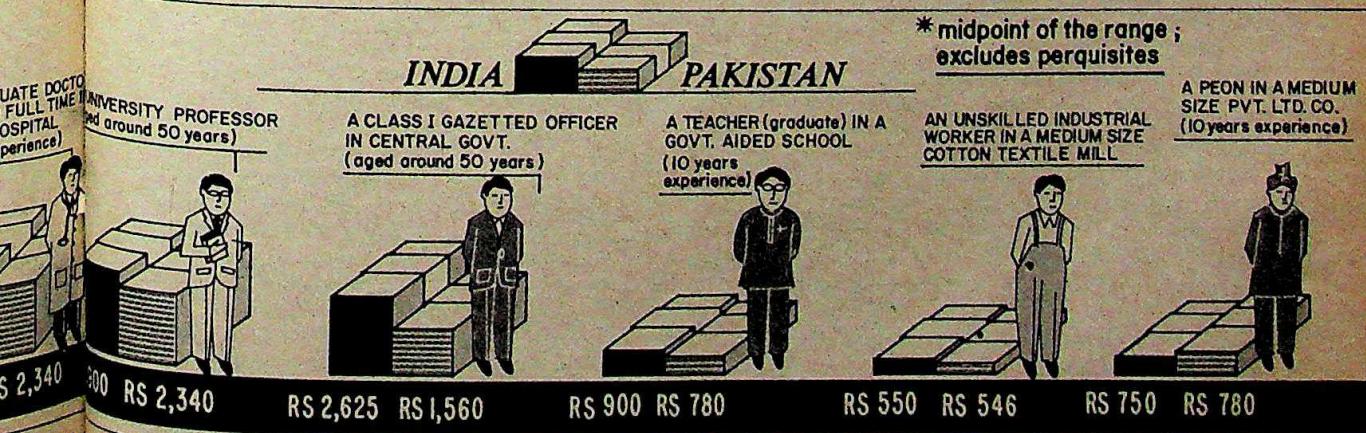
After collecting the prices of various food items, an estimate was made of the quantity consumed (of each item) by a family of five every month. It was assumed that the typical household would consume both wheat and rice.

The MARG Housewife Basket calculations show that Bombay is clearly the most expensive city—almost 15 per cent more expensive than Islamabad which comes second. The MARG Housewife Basket in the other four cities is 3 per cent to 7 per cent cheaper than in

Islamabad, with Calcutta emerging cheapest among the six cities.

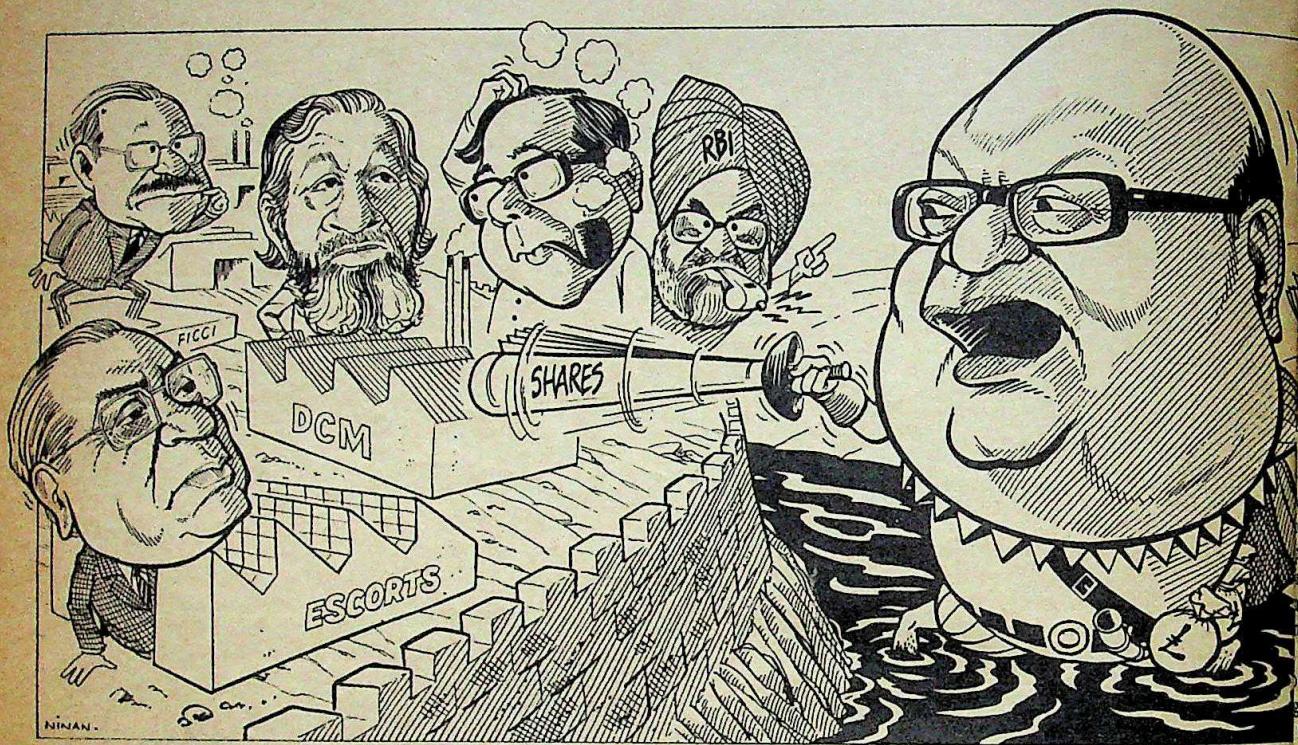
### Salaries and wages in India and Pakistan

In general, salaries (excluding perquisites) in India are higher than in Pakistan—particularly for Government and semi-Government jobs (such as secretary to the Central Government, Class I gazetted officer, university professor, trader, etc). The large multinationals pay their top men much better in Pakistan than in India but medium-sized companies in India pay their senior managers better. Unskilled workers in both countries have fairly comparable salaries.



SWRAJ PAUL

# The Battle Escalates



**S**WRAJ PAUL brings to the sedate world of corporate boardrooms and international finance the roiling boisterousness of a street-fighter. Blustering, belligerent and loud-mouthed, Paul plays by his own rules: insulting opponents, taunting referees, appealing to bystanders with populist fulminations, and punctuating his attack with bouts of raucous, deafening laughter that flattens victims into blubbering speechlessness.

All this and more was in evidence last fortnight as Paul stomped the country like an angry bear, launching the latest counter-offensive in his controversial bid to grab large, potentially controlling shareholdings in DCM and Escorts. Addressing gatherings of share brokers, investors, company executives, management pundits, Rotarians, members of Parliament and journalists in Calcutta, Bombay and Delhi, Paul launched a blistering attack on the managements of DCM and Escorts, and—broadening his blade—took swipes at other noted industrialists, top government functionaries, critical journalists and what he felt was the "muck" in Indian business.

When he landed in India in late July,

Paul had virtually nothing going for him. Both DCM and Escorts had refused to register shares that he had bought on the Delhi Stock Exchange. Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee had been forced to state that company take-overs by non-residents would not be allowed, the Reserve Bank had first blocked Rs 1.07 crore that he had wanted transferred to his broker and then carried out an inquiry into whether he had flouted foreign exchange laws and regulations, while virtually the entire business community was up in arms against the foreign marauder.

**Offence Tactics:** Undaunted, Paul charged into hostile territory like a one-man demolition squad. In 10 days of powerful rhetoric he scored a psychological victory, if nothing else. Refusing to concede that he was up against heavy odds, he chose to attack rather than defend, all the while maintaining an air of boundless confidence. The attack was on ground of his own choosing. As he told a gathering of economic journalists in Delhi, the issue was not so much a question of his own investments as the right of managements to refuse to register "legally acquired" shares, the "misuse of institutional funds", the handling of "public

companies like private estates", "shares registered free ride" that industrialists were envious of on public funds.

In tactics that revealed a shrewd tickling away under his bald pate, constantly developed the theme that it was futile to register shares in his name, fraud on shareholders and that it was typical of industrialists who were only start with, majority shareholders wanting to keep in the public-funded empires to themselves.

**Plausible Arguments:** Some of them clearly pained clearly struck responsive chords in the groups that assembled in the cities. Though the groups that assembled in the cities. Thought cities to listen to Paul. Were shares that he permitted traded on the stock exchanges "scripdom of toilet paper or negotiable instrument"? And how did the managements of companies in early pass down automatically from father to son? clearance, even when most of the shares were held by how many the public sector financial institutions? When the promoters had very small shareholdings? Were there to be "privileged shareholders"?

Support was soon mobilised when presidents of four stock exchanges appealed to the Finance Ministry against the transfers of DCM and Escorts to register the transfers under

erships. Brokers on the stock Exchange went on strike against the companies' actions; within days the ministry of the exchanges asking them to transfer shares in all cases other than those undesirable investors involved. The market immediately sensed that this unusual move had to help Paul, and the share prices of both DCM and Escorts jumped higher on the stock

Meanwhile, Paul's public campaign was matched by intense privatising. In Delhi, Paul met both Gandhi and the ambivalent Minister Pranab Mukherjee, in Bombay, Paul's brother Jit Paul had lobbied the Reserve Bank.

Neither for this or any other events seemed to be snowballing as the days went by. First to move to instal a new deputy governor of the Reserve Bank who apparently expected to take a strong stand on the legality of investments. Then, according to sources, the Law Minister was adopting a pro-Paul over-riding the views of its legal authorities. With the Ministry already having influence through its stock exchange, that it would prefer to have shares registered, the Government's machinery seemed to be swinging in Paul's favour.

**Regulations:** Official action, if and when it came, would have to focus on the scheme that had more serious irregularities than his named brokers were alleged to have had.

He was only start with, he had undertaken his investigations in the two companies without permission from the Reserve Bank—a responsive change non-resident investment in Indian firms. Though Paul repeatedly denied such a permission was needed, internal correspondence of the Punjab National Bank showed that permission had indeed been sought in early March. But the RBI had given him clearance, and subsequently asked him how money had been paid out by small shareholders. It was as a result of this institution's final transfer of Rs 1.07 crore to privileged classes had been blocked, and then re-baselised when Paul—which he claimed was at his disposal—was also some doubt as to whether the companies were eligible to make transfers under the non-resident scheme.

Share transfer form: controversy

The scheme is applicable to only those companies where 60 per cent of the share capital is in non-resident Indian hands, but in the case of Paul's companies the shares were held by a parent company, whose shares in turn were held by an overseas trust. The information available suggested that the RBI had declared these companies ineligible on this account.

**Technical Lacunae:** Paul and his brokers seemed to have tripped up on other technicalities as well. He had claimed that all his investments in the two companies had been made by April 28—before the finance minister announced a 5 per cent ceiling on non-resident holdings in any company. Paul's claim had been that since he had bought his 13 per cent holdings in DCM and 7 per cent in Escorts before this ceiling was imposed, he was exempt from the ceiling.

But the share transfer applications lodged with the companies showed that many of them were dated May and June, and they indicated prices prevailing on the stock-market well after April. In some cases, even the share transfer forms were stamped by the registrar of companies only in May, while

the purchase dates were still later. Clearly, Paul's brokers had not completed their purchases in April.

There was also the question of whether he had run foul of laws that prohibit non-residents from indulging in forward trading on the stock-market. Paul says that he started his purchases in January, but payments began to be made for them only in March—clear evidence of impermissible forward transactions.

**Clean Chit:** Sensing that these questions might be papered over or officially declared to have been answered to the Government's satisfaction, Bharat Ram told a meeting of economic journalists last fortnight: "What action has the RBI taken in regard to the irregularities and illegalities brought to its attention?" The DCM chairman called for action to find out the precise dates of Paul's transactions in order to determine whether they were in order. "If this investigation is made, a lot of true facts would come to light", said Bharat Ram.

Whenever questioned on these vital issues, Paul insisted that he had complied with all the rules and regulations in force, and that he had operated openly and legally through a nationalised bank. "My legal opinion is that it absolutely conforms to the Indian Reserve Bank's regulations. Otherwise, do you think I am a fool wasting Rs 13 crore?"

The scenario, as it appeared to be building up, was that the Government seemed inclined to give Paul a clean chit, and he would then be free to go for redress against the companies' action to the Company Law Board. Time for this was running out, as any appeal to the company law board has to be made in 60 days of share transfer refusal being communicated. In the case of Escorts, this was done in mid-June, and Paul would have to move very quickly if he was not to be time-barred from appealing to the Company Law Board.

Even if this deadline passed, he could still go to the courts, but these are restricted to viewing such issues in a narrower legal frame, and cannot—for instance—ask the companies to disclose the precise reasons for refusing share transfer.

**Undisclosed Sources:** Finance Minister Mukherjee had so far been playing an equivocal game. He initially dismissed the industrialists' fears of any non-resident raid on their companies, then refused to modify the non-resident investment scheme until virtually forced to, and more recently—in the context of questions raised about the source

of Swraj Paul's money – refused to enquire into the origin of non-resident funds, arguing that then no one would invest.

Paul himself, when questioned about the source of his money, merely said that his companies relied for their operations on share capital, reserves and bank loans. Newspaper articles questioning the ability of his companies to raise Rs 13 crore for investment were dismissed as "rubbish... Some of these fellows have been so stupid and illiterate that they just do not know how to read" a balance sheet. Commented Bharat Ram: "Taking into account the possibility of a foreign national being able to invest in India through non-resident Indian fronts, is it not necessary for the non-resident investor to divulge his source of money?"

Meanwhile, sensing Mukherjee's proclivities, officials in his ministry were carefully trimming their own sails. And the financial institutions, which hold 45 per cent and 54 per cent of the shares in DCM and Escorts respectively, were keeping their options open. The Life Insurance Corporation's nominee on the Escorts board stayed away when share transfer was refused. And in DCM, all the three institutional directors abstained on the vote for refusing transfer.

**Battle Lines:** Despite the seeming lack of official support, both DCM and Escorts were readying for a full-scale legal battle should that become necessary. And company spokesmen maintained that they were confident of their legal position. This confidence seems justified, judging by Paul's reluctance to go to the courts straightaway, though he warned that "When I go to the law they will hear a lot from me. I will fire the shot." Lawyers acting on behalf of DCM and Escorts pointed out that they had hard documentary evidence to prove that Paul's actions would not hold up in court, and that the Government would be violating basic principles if it condoned these actions.

Pending these possible developments, the war was being fought out in the street, with Paul turning out a masterly performance during his barnstorming tour of the three major cities. Striking a populist stance, he harped on industrialists' lifestyles, repeatedly called his opponents "dacoits" who were trying to keep out an honest shareholder.

Escorts Chairman H.P. Nanda described Paul in this context as a "bull on a Bharat yatra in a china shop". But taking his set-piece of a message around with gusto and panache, Paul gave every indication of hugely enjoying the spotlight and quickly became the star performer in what he

himself termed a "Rs 13 crore cabaret".

**I**NVITED to the INDIA TODAY office for lunch and a two-hour question-answer session with the magazine's editors. Paul was in peak form during what turned out to be a command performance. Mixing vitriolic comments with his irrepressible humour, dishing out saucy details of industrialists' personal life-styles and deftly evading the more searching questions, Paul gave little away while conveying the impression of being a man who gets what he wants.

An uncomfortable question was greeted with a bullying response, the decibel-level rising rapidly as he was off very quickly on another hectoring tangent. If a point had to be driven home, the eyes would narrow, an accusing finger jab forward, and the shaky grammar become even more faulty in the apoplectic haste to deliver the final verbal blow. Then, quickly, the voice would drop to



## Swraj Paul

*"I have paid Rs 13 crore to tell them that they are dacoits."*

a caressing persuasiveness as he declaimed that "there is only one thing I have now. That I owe to India, and I owe it to at least one hundred thousand people who have written to me.... I cannot abuse their faith and trust in me." This great task: to clean up Indian business.

During this, as well as his other engagements, his language was unrestrained and openly abusive. Dismissing Bharat Ram, chairman of DCM and Nanda of Escorts as "two-penny ha'penny fellows" who as "dacoits" were worse than Phoolan Devi because "she at least says she is a dacoit", he charged: "See what salaries they get... and see the disproportionate standards of living."

**Caustic Comments:** Anyone who had been critical of his operations came in for similar swipes, including J.R.D. Tata. "What is Tata's record? Let me deal with the Tatas, because this holy cow which you people have made out, I want to ask questions. I land in Bombay, and what do I hear? The Bombay Union of Journalists tells me, 'Mr Swraj Paul,

have you heard about this plot of land from the Government of India by the Tatas? Have you heard of Forbes, where some director had to commit suicide? Have you heard of SKF Bearings, where there is a big scandal about foreign exchange?... With all this scandal, hasn't the house of Tatas come out of the brush, and said here it is...'"

Public servants were not spared either. Obviously piqued by the RBI's stance of investments, Paul said of RBI Governor Manmohan Singh: "Mr Nanda and Dr Manmohan Singh must have told him, Dr Manmohan Singh hold this. And that is when Nanda money was held.... What kind of grude ones nor of the Reserve Bank do you have?"

The public sector financial institutions were not to be spared either. Asked to comment on whether the institutions were in cahoots with the industrialists, Paul

"Something must be going on that the moment I question are all up in arms against us."

Sometimes, the repartee was devastating. Questioned in Bombay by son-in-law of an industrialist well-known for his links with the prime minister, regarding Paul's own "relations with Safdarjung Road", brought the house down. He snapped back: "Better your father-in-law's."

But more often he was plain abusive. In one inter-

view he referred to a member of parliament as a "first class idiot" and to critical MP's as "these idiots". Acting against meeting in Delhi, he accused two well-known journalists of having been "purchased" by the sh

**Unsubstantiated Statements:** Of course, sweeping and general statements could not always be backed by specifics. Talking of his company's financial information, but could not say what additional information he would like to give them to have: "I am too senior to go brokers, we have these damn technicalities." At one stage, he was charged that the refusal to register his company was an "act of fraud". But when it was pointed out to him that British company's was the same as the Indian one in this aspect, he was bluster once again: "Of course, that the law has no meaning. A stock exchange act of fraud operation is a very sacred operation. Doing the board's into this sort of legalities. That is why companies like (lawyer N.A.) Palkhiwala are making hell of a lot of money and keeping over three Government into circles."

This abrasive stance was not with

For since Indian industrialists were  
that Paul's business record was far  
unashamed, his intention clearly was to  
that others could be tarred with  
the brush. But while some of the char-  
acter often managed to raise a good  
was also building up a good deal of  
scandal.

**Bharat Ram:** "It is distressing  
Mr Paul has come here to question  
so many Indian public figures... Who is Mr Paul, a  
citizen, talking in the poorest taste, to  
Nanda asked on the people who live and work  
him. Dr Nanda committed to India?" Said Escorts  
that is when Nanda: "Our discreet silence to  
kind of crude onslaught and ill-founded  
you have... should not be misunderstood."

Asked if Paul's repeated charges against  
Nanda and Bharat Ram strongly  
Referring to Paul's charge that he had  
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two well-known, Nanda said: "My board of direc  
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ments: O always been unanimously passed for 23  
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n he would escort annual general meeting and  
senior to go brokers, when they tried to register  
At one stage got no support. Nanda also said that  
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1972 and 1978, when share transfers  
en refused by various companies, the

decisions had been upheld by the Company Law Board and the courts. Nanda argued that if his board accepted Paul's shares when the legality of their purchase was in doubt the board itself would become liable to penalties under the law. Further, Paul's public comment made it clear that he intended to destabilise the management of the company, which would not be in the shareholders' interest. Nanda added that companies in Britain too had often refused to transfer shares, and courts in Britain had upheld these decisions.

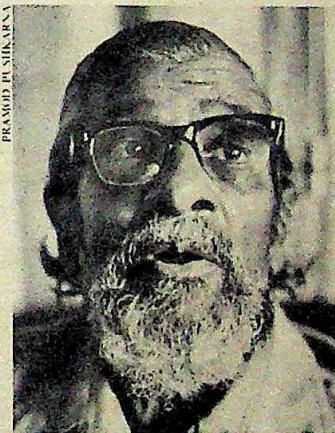
**Performance Records:** Bharat Ram and Nanda also questioned Paul's own record on the issues that he sought to raise: the record of his companies in Britain and the Apeejay group's companies in India, and the fact that the tea companies taken over by Paul in the last couple of years had seen a deterioration in financial performance after the takeover, with profits giving way to losses.

"slow poison," he shot back: "Because I am in no hurry". He denied any intention of pulling out, vowing to fight to the finish: "If I pull out this will be really ruining my image, and I cannot afford to ruin my image."

Perhaps the only circumstance in which he might consider withdrawing from battle would be if the prime minister indicated to him that it might be better in the larger national interest if he dropped the matter. As observers saw the situation, Mrs Gandhi has to live with Indian industrialists, who have rallied together on this issue in a rare show of unity. Paul seemed to be aware of these possibilities, for he constantly emphasised on various occasions that while others had let Mrs Gandhi down in times of trouble, he had always stood by her. Till last fortnight-end, however, Mrs Gandhi gave no indication to taking any initiative in the matter. And it seemed impossible to make out whether Paul's air of confidence was ge-

## Bharat Ram

*Who is Mr Paul,  
a British citizen,  
living in the poorest  
e, to comment on  
people who live  
and work and are  
nitted to India?"*



## H.P. Nanda

*"Our discreet  
silence to his crude  
and ill-founded  
utterances...  
should not be  
misunderstood."*

Questioned on this, Paul argued that the share price of his tea companies had gone up since the time of the takeover, and that he would answer questions regarding the performance of his British companies only to his shareholders. "I have paid Rs 13 crore to tell them that they are dacoits. Let them come and buy shares in my company and I will satisfy them. If they are not satisfied, I will resign."

But this kind of slanging match was clearly not going to settle the issue, though both sides realised that it was important to keep public opinion on their side. The real action lay with the Government, and would then perhaps go before judicial bodies. Meanwhile, there was a clear contrast in the moods of the combatants. Bharat Ram and Nanda seemed to be on the defensive, while insisting that their defences were sound. In contrast, Paul conveyed supreme confidence, though he alternately stated that he regretted his decision to make his investments and that he was enjoying himself. When someone asked him why he was taking this

nine, or only a mask for the fact that he could be in a tight legal spot.

**Repercussions:** Whatever the outcome of this particular battle, it seemed clear last fortnight that it would have long-term repercussions in many directions. Most immediately, the non-resident portfolio investment scheme would be as good as a dead letter since every industrialist would now be suspicious of foreign investors. The entire imbroglio exposed, for one thing, that the investment scheme had been poorly drafted from the start, without sufficient thought being given to the various possibilities it opened up.

But equally important, Paul's fusillade of angry comments brought a new gulf between Indian industrialists and non-residents, and the impression abroad was that the Government was going back on its word in order to protect a handful of cowering industrialists who had run to the Government's petticoats for protection from the forces of an open capital market.

Most industrialists had also decided

that it was unsafe to bring down their shareholdings in companies, and virtually everyone had begun steps to strengthen positions. Nanda himself had raised his holdings in Escorts to a handsome 15 per cent—a level that Paul cannot match. Other directors on Nanda's board owned a further 3 per cent.

**Institution Roles:** Some of Paul's charges had also gone home, since he had clearly established that the Government's financial institutions had not been as assertive of their shareholding rights as they should have been. For instance, why could they not have taken a tougher line on automatic succession from father to son even if the latter had not proved himself?

The institutions' role, in the context of their enormous voting strength, was being considered by a high-powered committee set up two months ago, after the Paul controversy started. And informal soundings suggested that the committee's report might lead in the end to the institutions taking a tougher line *vis-a-vis* the managements of companies.

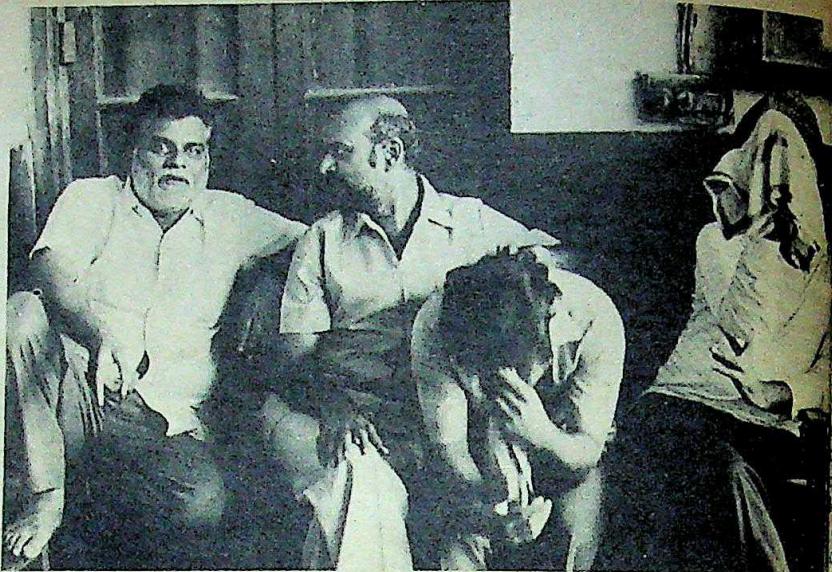
These ripples in what had till now been a placid world of comfortable businessmen, cosy in their own security, indicated that Paul may well have managed to bring about something of the shake-up that he kept shouting about from every rostrum. In many senses, Indian business would never be the same again. In this context at least, Paul's words were most appropriate: "I never imagined that a mere Rs 13 crore could shake up the whole of India's industry."

—T.N. NINAN

#### SAHARA INVESTMENTS

## Money Mirage

ON THE list of dubious business enterprises the Delhi-based Sahara Deposits and Investments (India) Ltd. will probably figure at the top. Within a short span of 30 months, the little-known savings company had accumulated an astounding Rs 50 crore from an estimated one lakh investors. But last fortnight the bubble burst when the Delhi Police Crime Branch began investigations into the company's operations, following the arrest of the top brass—D.J. Rawal, chairman, and J.S. Bawa, its managing director who together hold nearly 49 per cent of the company's paid-up capital of Rs 5.07 lakh—on charges of cheating, breach of faith and conspiracy to defraud. But the police have been finding the going exceedingly tough, a contributing factor being that the company has 500 branches spread all over the country. Said Crime Branch Deputy Commissioner R.S. Sahayee: "We have asked the Government to engage chartered accountants. The books are too



Rawal (second from left) and Bawa (extreme right): ingenious schemes

complicated for us." The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has also been asked to take over.

The suspicion that things were not all they should be, came when investor Kumar Purswani, a small-time shopkeeper, received a cheque from Sahara on the maturing of his deposit. The cheque bounced, and Purswani rushed to the police to register a case, followed in a matter of days by other disgruntled depositors, thousands of whom staged noisy demonstrations in front of the police headquarters. Sahayee now has several bounced Sahara cheques in his cupboard, and the official liquidator has been swamped with claims—after receiving 7,400 of them, he has stopped accepting any more.

**Ingenious Strategy:** The fact that Sahara attracted such torrents of cash despite low rates of interest speaks for the ingenuity of Rawal and his cohorts. Under the commercial loans and investments plan, for instance, depositors could part with as little as a rupee a day for 25 days a month and collect Rs 1,800 after five years. In terms of interest, it was a mere 10 per cent, but there were attractive baits: 'hundi' and 'article and cash loans' which could be given at the company's discretion during the five-year period. Thus Chandigarh tailor Harnek Singh Rai received a loan of Rs 2.5 lakh, six months after he had joined the scheme.

A lot was also left to the resourcefulness and glib persuasive powers of the canvassers, who stood to gain a massive 40 per cent commission on the amounts they channelled into the company. Taking advantage of the RBI's lax controls over imposition of regulations of banking law, Sahara floated a fixed deposit scheme as well. Interest, at the rate of 14

per cent compounded half-yearly, was schemes red on deposits for over three years. With grandiloqu canvasser adding a further incentive by his own fa of diverting a part of his commission, ift him to tors were easily won over. But the most dresting scheme was the 'children welfare of incion', which a parent could join by performance a fixed amount every month. A "highest p sum bonus of 30 per cent was paid after years, but there were other 'indirect comMARKETS sations' as well—every manager of the company's 500 branches conducted four quarterly examinations to help "increase the i gence of the child". The topper received a certificate and a gift pack worth Rs 50 cloud—the company, and annual jamborees there is also offered. Those who did not want to lift of this facility received an additional as to wh of 6 per cent. The scheme caught the government of the lower middle class, an estimated port of a of whom had joined within a year.

**The Fall:** Despite the novel scheme and the fantastic promises, Sahara may possibly Waterloo all too soon. Laments Rovernment "The system was functioning so well we blown most of my agents and employees had ever, unlike led their relatives and friends and we led in this the mistake of giving out loans wilsides, people taking firm guarantees. Today Rs 82 financial cl outstanding against guarantees that we see that th employees furnished on behalf of the men they had enrolled." But Rawal might mean oversimplifying things. Contrary to his own, though testations about defaulters, he has submissions are no claims before the official liquidation out of c Crime Branch sleuths believe this might be but thing because the beneficiaries are the family mem bers of the directors.

However, until the cheques bounces. They to March, Sahara had been the most success

the small investments business. It was in 1980 as Sahara Savings and Pvt Ltd, in Gorakhpur. In August of the same year, however, Rawal fell out with his partner Subrata Roy and each of them started a different company—the Sahara Financial and Investments (India) Ltd., and Sahara Investments (India) Ltd. But as their company headed towards disaster, Rawal put out advertisements in major Hindi newspapers saying that his firm had nothing to do with the other companies bearing similar names and was run by "undesirable persons". "That is our fate," says Rawal ruefully.

**Complicated Case:** Even with the arrests and the liquidation, the Crime Branch may have a tough time tying up the case. A lack of care in financial matters on the part of the police is a disadvantage. And Rawal is confident that he will be let off easily. Says Rawal, "I owe very little to people. Most of them will be paid after the maturity of their deposit, which is at least five years from now, and thus no case can be made against me."

In the preamble in the booklet listing the various yearly wage schemes offered by Sahara said, "Man is the architect of his own fate. Consistency in his efforts will bring him to the highest peak of glory but the most cut-throat the doomed company is ironical. There is a well-known case of inconsistency between promise and performance which did not lift anyone's month. A 'highest peak of glory'."

—SHEKHAR GUPTA

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Additional as to what exactly is happening but

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Rawal might in the meantime, most stockbrokers are

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In Delhi, the stockbrokers downed

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Deposit (Rs.)	Term	Total Earning (Rs.)
125.00 p.m.	1st 120 months	27,215.00
27,000.00	Kuber Yojna during 2nd 120 months	79,920.00
125.00 p.m.	2nd 120 months	27,215.00
Total		1,07,135.00

Interest rate subject to Reserve Bank's directive



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UCO/CAS 127/83

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SOS Children's Villages of India,  
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New Delhi 110019

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CIT-11/TE(57)/60/1336 20th July 1982

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**A little from you  
can do so much for them**

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## ACTIVE STOCKS

	High 1983	Low 1983	Close 4.8.83	Change on Fortnight
Sarabhai	17.75	13.00	13.75 (0.75)	
St. Island	37.65	30.50	32.50 (1.00)	
Saints	36.00	30.50	34.50 (1.50)	
Sai Cement	451.50	350.00	441.50 (10.00)	
Saco	30.00	25.00	30.00 2.00	
Saco	1,625.00	1,025.00	1,625.00 (205.00)	
Saco	48.00	37.40	44.10 (0.75)	
S Rayon	312.00	210.00	240.00 (24.00)	
S Rayon	27.85	18.05	27.85 0.05	
S Rayon	56.90	46.10	51.10 (2.50)	
S Rayon	74.00	38.00	50.00 2.00	
S Dyeing	93.50	57.50	76.00 (4.00)	
S Industries	36.45	23.75	26.70 0.20	
S Bond	32.10	26.00	31.75 0.05	
S Mills	246.50	190.00	206.00 (11.00)	
Sires	252.50	195.00	250.00 5.00	
S Spinning	872.50	695.00	835.00 (11.00)	
S India	63.25	51.00	62.70 0.45	
S India	99.00	84.00	88.00 (6.00)	
Soch Mills	105.20	32.31	76.00 (3.25)	
S Agro	184.00	135.00	162.50 (15.00)	
S India	28.10	20.10	24.10 (1.10)	
Sia Hotels	29.00	20.00	27.00 1.50	
Engineering	35.00	29.00	35.00 1.00	
S Rayon	82.87	39.75	56.62 (5.88)	
Specialities	71.50	60.50	71.50 1.50	
S Rayon	31.50	20.00	24.00 (0.25)	
Steen Williams	23.00	18.00	20.50 (0.60)	
S Rayon	52.00	45.00	45.00 (2.12)	
Sun Aluminium	41.00	32.10	39.70 0.60	
Sun Lever	70.00	51.75	68.75 2.25	
Sun Motors	36.86	26.40	35.42 0.30	
Aluminium	22.80	16.25	20.50 (1.40)	
Explosives	27.40	22.00	24.50 (1.60)	
Organic	35.00	25.50	35.00 1.00	
Oxygen	35.15	30.40	33.75 (1.25)	
S Rayon	86.00	67.50	71.50 (4.50)	
S Rand	87.00	78.00	79.00 (6.00)	
S Rand	44.85	32.50	32.85 0.15	
S Tea	34.90	20.35	30.65 0.50	
Synthetics	57.50	32.00	37.50 (3.50)	
Sor	87.00	70.00	76.00 nil	
Sor	68.10	57.30	60.50 (1.50)	
Engineering	163.00	68.00	109.00 15.00	
(Madras)	24.50	18.00	22.50 (0.50)	
& Toubro	73.00	52.00	62.00 (2.50)	
Machines	27.30	14.00	24.30 (1.40)	
Costs	62.00	40.00	47.75 7.75	
S & Mahindra	22.60	15.50	18.00 1.00	
Rubber	66.00	42.00	55.50 0.50	
Industries	35.37	22.69	28.12 (0.25)	
Iron	292.50	225.00	252.50 nil	
Organic	27.50	19.75	27.50 4.00	
Paper	26.00	20.35	22.25 (1.15)	
Auto	207.50	160.00	165.00 (7.50)	
Modis	51.00	40.20	47.70 (2.55)	
Modis	376.00	229.00	302.00 (11.00)	
Modis	46.00	36.00	39.75 (1.75)	
Modis	52.00	36.50	51.00 3.50	
Modis	183.00	154.00	159.50 1.50	
Modis	28.12	19.00	28.12 2.62	
Fibres	42.00	22.20	42.40 0.60	
Products	41.50	27.75	35.25 (0.75)	
Cements	28.25	15.25	22.25 (1.75)	
Modis	48.00	38.30	44.80 0.80	
Modis	67.00	49.50	53.00 1.00	
Modis	322.50	237.00	295.50 (7.50)	
Modis	455.00	350.00	396.00 (4.00)	
Modis	59.00	38.00	53.50 (6.10)	
Modis	18.00	16.00	18.00 0.75	
Modis	25.75	21.50	23.75 (0.50)	
Modis	26.50	22.00	24.00 (0.30)	
Modis	317.00	262.00	313.00 (2.00)	
Modis	21.50	15.00	20.50 0.50	
Modis	32.50	22.40	28.30 (2.00)	
Modis	14.10	12.25	12.60 0.35	

of a decision by the Government on the non-resident issue.

The share price index has been steadily declining for the last few weeks at the rate of roughly 2 to 3 per cent a week, which means that it might touch the year's low by the end of September or so, unless there is some good news to buck it up. Corporate reports are not much to write home about though they are not all that depressing either. Some companies, like Lohia Machines, are doing very well indeed and might do even better this year.

Lohia Machines expects a five-fold increase in its turnover in the coming financial year, from Rs 20 crore to Rs 100 crore when its scooter and nylon chips projects go on stream. S.S. Miranda, a Bombay-based company that makes cutting tools, is setting up a new plant in Gujarat for the manufacture of high technology powder metal products in collaboration with a US firm. The new project which is expected to go on stream by the middle of next year will double its turnover from Rs 10 crore to Rs 20 crore, and possibly take it to Rs 30 crore by 1986 when the plant will be in full production.

**New Ventures:** Some companies are changing their business profile so rapidly that it is hard to keep pace with them. Voltas, basically a trading group, is going into manufacturing in a big way and is about to acquire a big stake in pharmaceuticals. Among the companies mentioned are May and Baker, and Merck, Sharp and Dohme. Voltas have been distributors for a number of pharmaceuticals for a long time but have apparently decided to take the plunge into production.

Apart from Voltas, other Tata companies are said to be looking for likely corporate acquisitions. Tata Steel is keen to acquire Davy Ashmore which operates a factory in Kharagpur. Davy Ashmore is an Indian subsidiary of the Davy United group which nearly ran away with the Paradip steel contract. Without the Rs 3,500 crore project contract, Davy Ashmore has nothing much to cut its teeth on, but with Tata money, it should go quite a long way. Its 10-rupee share was quoted around Rs 20 last week, and the scrip is worth watching.

While the markets languish, the best bet for investors are the new issues which have been coming up steadily, nearly all of which are said to have been oversubscribed. Some more are in the wings. Modis' new company to make photocopying machines in collaboration with Xerox is expected eagerly. The plant is already in production on a 100 per cent export basis. Other new issues are also in the pipeline, which just shows that though things are dull they are never so dull as to discourage the hopefuls from knocking, and often quite successfully, at the money market.

## WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

Country	Unit & Currency	TT Selling Rates(Rs)	TT Buying Rates(Rs)
Australia	I As S	8.9163	8.8179
Austria	100 As Sch	54.3845	53.8188
Bahrain	I Dinar	27.0787	26.8298
Bangladesh	100 Taka	40.1011	39.9958
Canada	I Can \$	8.2639	8.1762
Egypt	I Egp £	11.6504	11.5918
France	I Fr Fr	1.2687	1.2544
Hong Kong	I HK \$	1.3704	1.3543
Indonesia	100 Rupiah	1.0275	1.0199
Iran	100 Rial	11.7170	11.6296
Italy	100 Lt Lira	0.6602	0.6540
Japan	100 Jap Yen	4.1891	4.1377
Kenya	I K Shilling	1.0770	1.0664
Kuwait	I Dinar	34.8616	34.5470
Malaysia	I ML \$	4.3262	4.2775
Mauritius	I Rupee	0.9882	0.8916
Nepal	I Rupee	0.6956	0.6905
Pakistan	I Rupee	0.7915	0.7660
Netherlands	I D Gld	3.6103	3.3759
Singapore	I Sing \$	4.7550	4.7019
Spain	100 Sp Pt	6.8161	6.7533
Sri Lanka	I Rupee	0.4285	0.4196
Sweden	I Sw Kr	1.3015	1.2869
Switzerland	I Sw Fr	4.9849	4.6646
Tanzania	I T Sh	1.0420	1.0343
Thailand	100 Baht	44.2298	43.8303
UK	I Pound	15.1355	14.9993
USA	I US \$	10.2975	10.1600
UAE	I Dihram	2.7792	2.7536
USSR	I Rouble	14.0106	13.9076
W. Germany	I DM	3.8148	3.7738

These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo, Ltd., New Delhi and quoted between the banks on August 5, 1983.

## ECONOMIC TRENDS

PRICES	Latest	Change on month
ET Commodity Price Index*		
August 4, 1983	271.0	4.5
Cereals	263.0	(5.5)
Chemicals	371.7	7.8
Industrial Fibres	185.3	(3.3)
Metals	355.5	(2.7)
Sugar	198.0	(17.0)
Textile Yarn	218.9	(1.4)
Vegetable Oils	334.8	16.7
Gold, standard,		
August 4, 1983	1,800.00	30.00
(Rs per 10 gm)		
Silver, .999		
August 4, 1983	3,440.00	140.00
(Rs per kg)		

## SHARES

ET Share Price Index*		
August 4, 1983	256.9	(6.0)
Cement	259.0	(13.9)
Chemicals	210.1	2.8
Engineering	436.5	(9.9)
Fertilisers	205.5	(4.7)
Man-made Fibres	383.4	(14.7)
Paper	506.6	(19.9)
Rubber Goods	163.7	(12.5)

MONEY	(per cent)	
Money Supply, July 8, 1983		1.7
Bank Deposits		2.5
Foreign Exchange Assets		5.4

\* 1969-70 = 100

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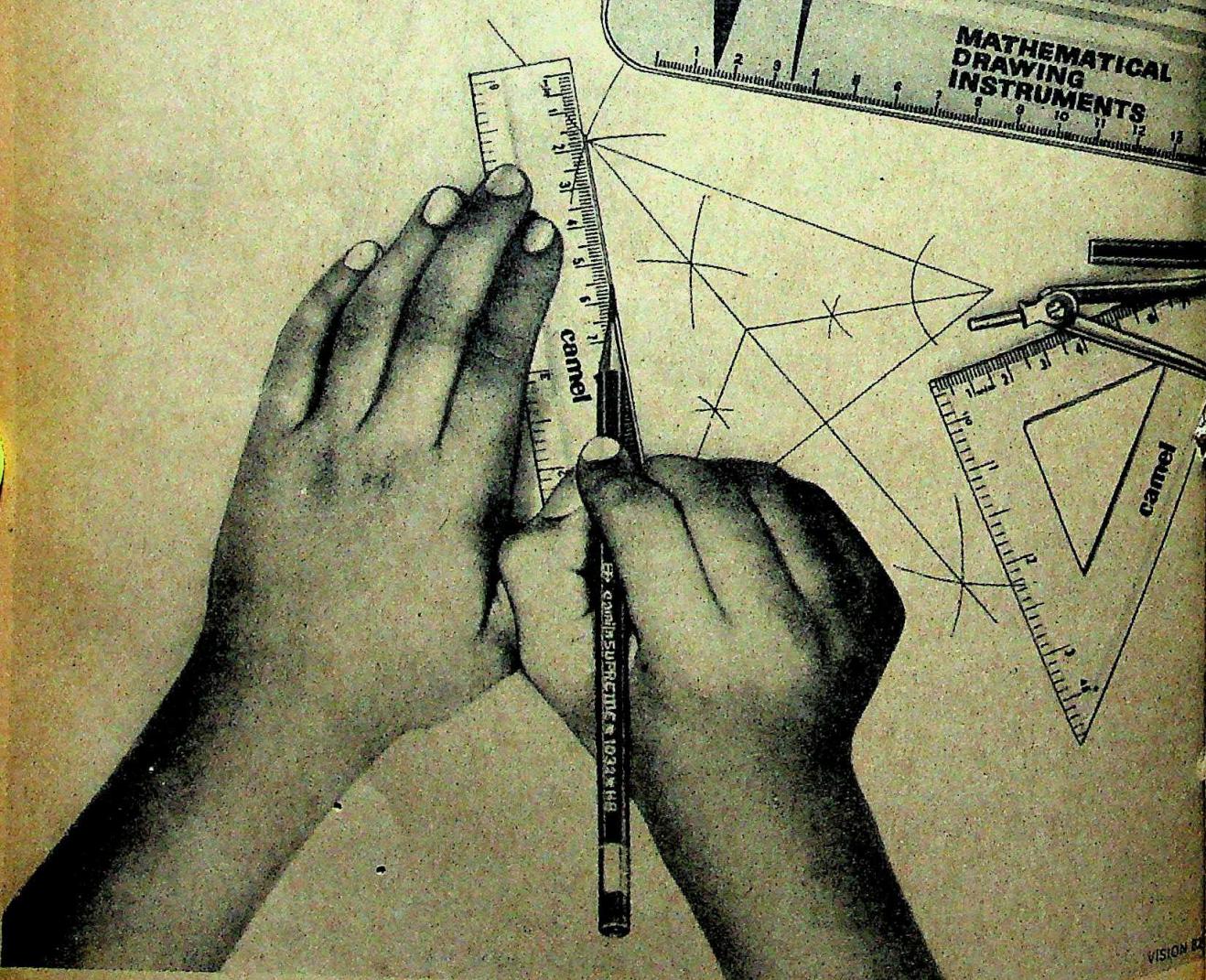


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staying

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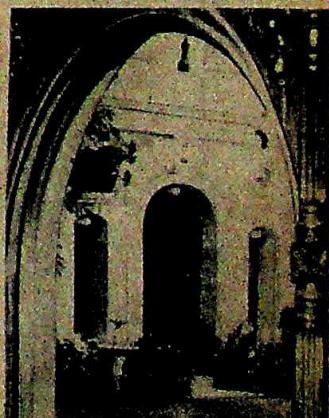


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AIR/DOORDARSHAN

# Ruling The Waves

**R**ULE India, rule the air waves. Or so it seemed, judging from the new, all-out propaganda blitz launched by the government-controlled All India Radio (AIR) and Doordarshan since June, projecting Mrs Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi with a relentless regularity to the electronic media's 11 crore audience. Compared to the magnitude of the present high-voltage media massage, even "All Indira Radio", the wry sobriquet of the '70s, sounded like a polite understatement. Especially hit were the news bulletins, where all professional norms of news selection were cast aside to make room for a brazen personality cult. All conceivable, and inconceivable, ruses were employed to put Rajiv Gandhi's name on the headlines of nationally transmitted news, though he is just one of the five general secretaries of the party ruling at the Centre.

Examples of AIR and Doordarshan favouritism:

- in June-July this year, of the 930 minutes of air time given to the AIR's national news broadcasts, more than 200 minutes went to report what Mrs Gandhi had done or said;

- Rajiv was mentioned nine times in July in the AIR national English broadcasts and four times in the first ten days of August; no other political leader in the country, who is not a member of the Government, has been mentioned as frequently as Rajiv;

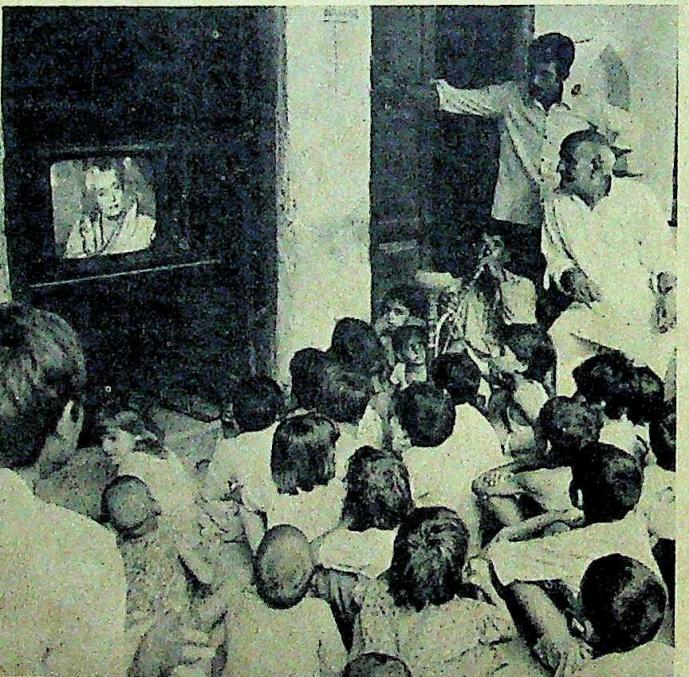
- Doordarshan is now making it a point to "cut in" Rajiv's still photograph, or to show him on film or video tape recorder (VTR) whenever he is mentioned in news; this rule is not strictly followed even with regard to Mrs Gandhi;

- since June, each function of Rajiv, ranging from the inauguration of a wrestling contest to a seminar on packaging of fruits, has been covered by AIR and Doordarshan;

- AIR's scheduled late evening programmes have been knocked off with sickening regularity to accommodate unedited broadcasts of Mrs Gandhi's speeches during the day if she happened to deliver them outside New Delhi.

The non-Congress(I) states have never

felt as humiliated and wronged by the broadcast media as now. Farooq Abdullah, the chief minister of Jammu & Kashmir, threatened, last fortnight, to set up a state-owned "Kashmir Radio". Jyoti Basu, the Marxist chief minister of West Bengal, publicly remonstrated against the "misuse of official media". N.T. Rama Rao, the Telugu Desam chief minister of Andhra Pradesh, who was denied the use of AIR broadcasting facility during the recent strike of the non-gazetted staff, was so put off that he



Rural viewers glued to the set: a Gandhi monopoly

refused it when it was offered to him again. Recently, 50 non-Congress(I) MP's gave a memorandum to the speaker of the Lok Sabha alleging that AIR had been even using patently *sub judice* matters to blacken the opposition parties. And, during the current session of Parliament, it is H.K.L. Bhagat, the minister of state in charge of Information & Broadcasting (I&B), who had to face most of the flak for allowing the official broadcast media to approximate an Indian version of 1984.

**Frequency:** Impervious to these charges, AIR, whose news division is manned by officers of the Central Information Service (CIS), and which is the main source of news for Doordarshan too, only stepped up what an opposition MP deridingly des-

cribed as the "Gandhi content" of its bulletins. In the month of June alone in Lucknow, 18 out of 31 of its 9 p.m. national news bulletins—relayed from all its 86 centres—with Mrs Gandhi, in June 1982, the corresponding figure was half that figure. From July 1 till August 1, broadcasts filled nearly 200 minutes of air time, though the speeches were hardly of earth-shaking nature.

On July 29, for instance, the schedule of AIR at 9.45 p.m. western music programme of the Delhi station of AIR was as follows: Advised to accommodate had been Gandhi's speech at Gangtok in 1980 Sikkim, delivered to the jail the next day, off week. It stated, Hindi programme. Our aim to make room for as laudable round of the prime minister's speeches at Gangtok, while pause being deleted. On Aug 1, it was again the turn of the 10.30 p.m. western music programme to be specially polished for the broadcast. It was 30-minute ceremonial speech than on Mrs Gandhi at Allahabad in report where she inaugurated a controversial television station.

Frequently, the chivvy and frequent the lead, or the first item "political 8.45 p.m. (Hindi) or the noticed striking (English) news bulletins newsworthy relayed from all the 86 stations if a point AIR, bore no relevance news value significant news events reported: it was day. On July 22, the if it concerned began with the prime minister's "dedicating" (sic) to the While the Rs 245-crore Kalpvriksh Bhagat atomic power project near Madras that the morrow". Thus, even an advance information of the prime minister's Madras visit AIR and I found to be worthy of treatment as the honour of M on the national network. However, noted so often as hardly an uneventful day: the Supreme Court, on that day, had refused a prime minister stay on hanging; Nihangs had on their Advisor clashed with the police in Punjab; the point in it king non-gazetted employees of Andhra Pradesh had announced their readiness the prime minister to the state Government uncondoning much as the and many top bureaucrats of the United and government were moved up, down and issues ways on that day.

An endless variety of ruses seen employed to put Rajiv on the screen. A banal statement made by him was pressed(I) pr

"ent" of its up by the radio and TV networks. He June alone in Lucknow that game hunting should national English, and it made news for the AIR from all its 86 items of the fact that there is already a ban June 1982. One hunting in the country. Similarly, half that figure Doordarshan camera crew followed him the lead Nepal where he addressed the local Sikhs evening burmouthing platitudes; but everything that was found worthy of mention in eight occasions national bulletins. Even his inauguration broadcasts at sports museum in Delhi last fortnight from all the sports judged as big news: it came right after in the farmland around 9.30 had headlines on Sri Lanka, and was act of air time spanned by VTR shots.

**Broadcast Policy:** The tenor and content of AIR and Doordarshan were increas-

ence, the schedule in brazen contradiction to the "news programme by broadcast media" outlined by the of AIR was the Advisory Committee, accommodate had been set up by the at Gangtok in 1980. The committee rejected the news policy last year, off record it stated, in a rather sanc-

tive tone, many of the

for laudable aims, such as:

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issues seen

In reality, AIR seldom drew a line of

the screen between the two identities of Mrs

Gandhi as the prime minister and as the

Advisory(I) president. Thus, on the eve of

the current session of Parliament, AIR (and Doordarshan) led the bulletin of July 15 with Mrs Gandhi lashing out at the Opposition at what happened to be a closed door session of the Congress(I) workers in Bangalore. Ostensibly, it was for the benefit of her supporters in Karnataka who had their morale mauled after the party's electoral defeat in January. Again, on July 21, she visited Garhwal, the constituency of H.N. Bahuguna, where too she mounted a trenchant attack on the Opposition: AIR and Doordarshan faithfully led their bulletins with her lengthy perorations. Fumed Bahuguna: "If I go to Medak (Mrs Gandhi's constituency) and say that Mrs Gandhi is responsible for delaying a solution to the Punjab crisis, will AIR as much as mention

himself admitted, "like a sports event".

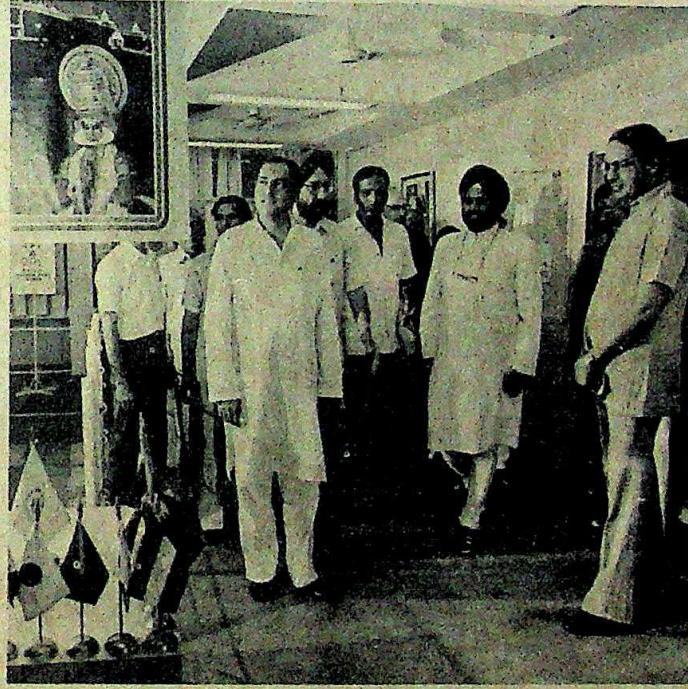
AIR reports on opposition leaders can in fact serve as models for news management by governments. Thus, on July 30: "The Congress(J) President, Jagjivan Ram, has expressed concern over the incident in Sri Lanka. In a statement in New Delhi today, he said he was sure that all political parties and the people of India will be solidly with the prime minister in any action the Government takes to protect the Tamilians in that country." To be sure, all the nine lines given to Ram on that day were put down to the column in a log-book under the heading: "Air time allotted to opposition."

The I&B Ministry often juggled figures to prove that it was indeed more fair-minded than what the Opposition thought of it.

Recently, when the Marxist MP's raised questions about the one-sided coverage of the panchayat elections in West Bengal in May, the Government defended itself with seemingly impeccable statistics. It replied that AIR Calcutta "had included, in all, 56 items consisting of 582 lines in respect of speeches on panchayat elections of the chief minister of West Bengal and Left Front leaders.... correspondingly, 73 items consisting of 733 lines on the speeches of ministers and leaders of the Congress(I) had been included". Angrily retorted Dipen Ghosh, a Marxist MP: "Which is greater, 56 or 73? 582 or 733? And the whole thing is a jugglery of arithmetic. The 582 lines are mostly official announcements, while the 733 lines are nearly all vituperative attacks on the Left Front."

**Blocking News:** On one hand, the developments on the non-Congress(I) front were being systematically blocked out of the news bulletins. On the other hand, Mrs Gandhi's utterances and actions were being reported not "in as much as" they made news but far in excess of it. This was often being done at the expense of hard news. A prime example is the treatment of the news of G.D. Birla's death on June 11. It was given 13 lines towards the tail-end of the AIR English bulletin at 9 p.m., and even this included three lines of a condolence message from the President of India and another two lines of the message of P.C. Sethi, the home minister. However, the bulletin began with a lengthy report on Mrs Gandhi's talks with Finnish leaders and her two-hour cruise on an ice-breaker around the Helsinki archipelago.

The official media are often so overzeal-



Rajiv inaugurating a sports museum in Delhi: media blitz

it? Conversely, if Hegde (the Karnataka chief minister) came to Delhi and blamed the Congress(I) in a closed door session of his Janata Party, would Doordarshan have covered it?"

**B**HAGAT, however, employed all the sophistry at his command to prove that the opposition leaders too found a mention in the broadcast media. The showpiece example is obviously Chandra Shekhar's padayatra which was mentioned and shown twice on the national hook-up and seven times in the regional bulletins of the Bombay and Madras centres of AIR and Doordarshan. But then the padayatra was totally divested of its political undertone and was reported, as a Doordarshan official

lous in playing up Mrs Gandhi that very often the ethics of covering election speeches get a go-by and her campaign oratory gets reverential treatment, as though she were expected to make policy pronouncements in her campaigns. On June 1, AIR led its national evening bulletins with Mrs Gandhi's speech in Jammu that "India will retaliate with strength if anyone attacks the country". The point is, it was neither a policy statement nor the announcement of some new measure to strengthen the Indian defence. And, it was only expected of a government to "retaliate with strength" if it were attacked from outside. As a matter of fact, it was an election speech by Mrs Gandhi, the Jammu & Kashmir polls having taken place on June 5, delivered before the ex-servicemen-dominated audiences in the Jammu region. The bulletin, however, neither identified it as Mrs Gandhi's election speech nor balanced it with even a passing mention of the many rallies addressed by the non-Congress(I) leaders in Jammu & Kashmir on that day.

Bhagat dismissed out of hand the charge that the Union Government was misusing the broadcast media. "The media is totally free now," he said, adding pontifically that "it was greatly misused by the Janata government when the AIR reported in great details the proceedings of the Shah Commission even though there was no charge-sheet formally lodged against Mrs Gandhi." But AIR, under the Congress(I) management, pulled out all its stops in reporting legally unsubstantiated charges against elected non-Congress(I) governments. In its broadcasts between July 1 and July 10, virtually every leader of the Congress(I), including Arun Nehru and Rajiv, were extensively quoted alleging massive rigging in the Jammu & Kashmir elections. At one stage, the Srinagar centre of Doordarshan reportedly refused to carry in its regional bulletins everything that the Congress(I) leaders had to say about the 'rigging'. Abel Singh Garewal, director of the centre, soon paid the price for it. Last fortnight, he was transferred by a telephonic order and was asked to hand over charge within 24 hours. The centre is now without a director.

L.K. Advani, general secretary of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and former I&B minister, said bitterly: "The downgrading of the I&B portfolio after the removal of Vasant Sathe was the first step ensuring that the official media policy was directed straight from 1 Safdarjung Road. This is precisely what happened during the Emergency. I hold that radio and TV have become one of the major irritants in the Centre-state relations too."

**Faux Pas:** Advani was hinting at the recent imbroglio over N.T. Rama Rao's

speech (INDIA TODAY, August 15). After refusing Rama Rao the right to use AIR for addressing the striking non-gazetted officers, AIR officials spent two days shifting responsibility for the faux pas. Finally it was revealed that S.S. Verma, the director-general of AIR, had himself ordered the Hyderabad centre not to let the chief minister use its broadcasting facility. The ensuing parliamentary debate also revealed two important facts: Arjun Singh, the Congress(I) chief minister of Madhya Pradesh, used AIR broadcasting facility most frequently—eight times in the first seven months of 1983; and Nripen Chakravarty, the Marxist chief minister of Tripura, used it the least—never.

If, according to Advani, the removal of

think hand-outs make news, professional broadcasting has nearly ended in this country." Besides Verma, who has no broadcasting background, there are two other deputy director-generals in AIR recruited from the Indian Police Service (IPS), who after security and administration.

**Hardware Expansion:** It is on ramshackle foundation of software Doordarshan is launching a Rs 68-hardware expansion programme, "to be completed by the end of 1984", thus steadily synchronising it with the 1985 editions. Of this, Rs 28 crore came from non-lapsable funds of the AIR, earned largely from its advertisement revenue. The plan was formulated, and even orders placed for transmission towers, in a time of five months. At its completion, 7 cent of the country will be brought under television transmission as against 25 per cent now. Bhagat said reverentially: "It is Gandhi who, as I&B minister, introduced regular television to this country. It is under her that most of the country will be covered by television."

The question is, what will Doordarshan show? As Iqbal Malik, columnist in *Indian Express* and a keen watcher of broadcast media, pointed out: "The majority of the transmitters will be low-power, allowing for district-level programming. The Centre has no plans for generating programmes at that level. It will therefore go on imposing on the states, and districts, canned stuff imported from abroad interspersed with publicity of the party."

Even the chairman of the Government's own committee on broadcasting, P.C. Joshi, expressed virtually the same when he wrote in *Mainstream* (July 9): "India seems to have entered the modern communication technology with a full awareness of its far-reaching implications for Indian society."

So, chances are that a new generation of television watchers at Ranchi, or Jabalpur, or Vijayawada, will be exposed to hours of *Here's Lucy* (Columbia Broadcasting System 1951 programme), *Smash* (1969) or Transtel's *Telematch*. If one cannot fully perceive the Anglo-Saxon humour of *Yes Minister* (BBC—1979), one can still be regaled by miles of "entertainment" from the Bombay film industry, including third-rate soap operas whose producers don't mind putting their stuff on TV because there is no return value left like a sliver of meat wedged between pieces of sandwich bread, there is unabashed publicity for the ruling party and its leaders. The choice is between political propaganda.

PRAMOD PUSHPAKAR



Bhagat: following the policy

Sathe was a landmark in the history of AIR and Doordarshan's subjugation, the other landmark was the appointment of Verma as AIR's director-general in February this year. The rule of director-general's appointment states that he may be selected from the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) provided he has 18 years experience "in a supervisory capacity in some educational, cultural or publicity" organisation and has "knowledge of India's cultural heritage and of different forms of literary, cultural and artistic expressions in the country".

Verma is an IAS officer of the West Bengal cadre who had served in the small industries directorate before being catapulted into the sensitive post of AIR's chief. On assumption of office, one of the first notes he had circulated among his staff was that public sector undertakings and their achievements should be given more prominence in AIR programmes. Said M.S. Bedi, president of the 1,200-strong AIR programme staff association: "With AIR headed by career bureaucrats, and the news service led by officials of the Central Information Service, who

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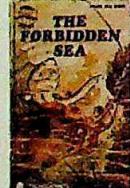
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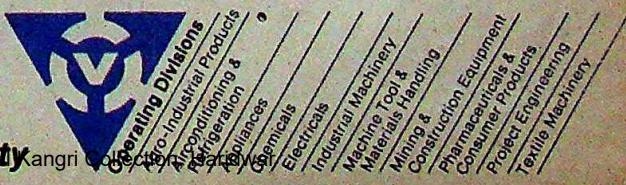


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## From Town

BANGALORE, India's garden city, is caught in the fever of a new green revolution. By planting five trees in gardens, citizens will soon receive concession on property tax when a recent government decision takes effect. Nature lovers have made honorary tree wardens with duty to check vandalism. Thousands of saplings are being given away free, and the papers report with indignation the felling of even a single tree. All this is giving the needed muscle to the Forest Department's massive afforestation plan, which has a budget of Rs 60 lakh yearly, for an initial three years. Says Shyam Sundar, chief conservator of forests: "The chief minister tells me I read in the papers that one tree had been felled in the city—if felling one tree is

bers. In fact, eight industrial estates now gird the city. In addition, the Urban Land Ceiling Act which puts a ban on individual property exceeding 7,200 sq ft has further contributed to the chopping down of trees, as people have less area then before to build on.

The current programme underway in Bangalore draws inspiration from the success of a similar project in Gandhinagar, Gujarat. Both the Bangalore City Corporation and the Bangalore Development Authority have joined forces with the Forest Department, making available vacant land earmarked for parks and traffic circles for the planting of trees. Barren lands, and 200 hectares around the city, as well as all the roads leading into it will be covered under this programme. The new Government ban on the expansion of the city and the provisions of the Tree Preservation Act which insist that every site measuring 40 by 60 ft should have at least two trees also ought to



Forest Department personnel planting saplings: massive plan

news today, then our effort has made an impact."

In the first year alone, the department will oversee the planting of one crore saplings. Exotic flowering or fruit-bearing trees like jacaranda, the yellow-flowered tulip and the South American rain tree will be given away free as a result of a campaign which a separate cell was set up by the Government in October last. According to government authorities, even taking into account the yearly decreasing survival rate of the plants, at least 1.5 million new saplings can be expected to survive after 10 years if the plan is implemented effectively. It is conjectured that the temperature of the city, known variously as "the air-conditioned city" and the "no-fan city", for its climate—will come down by as much as four degrees centigrade.

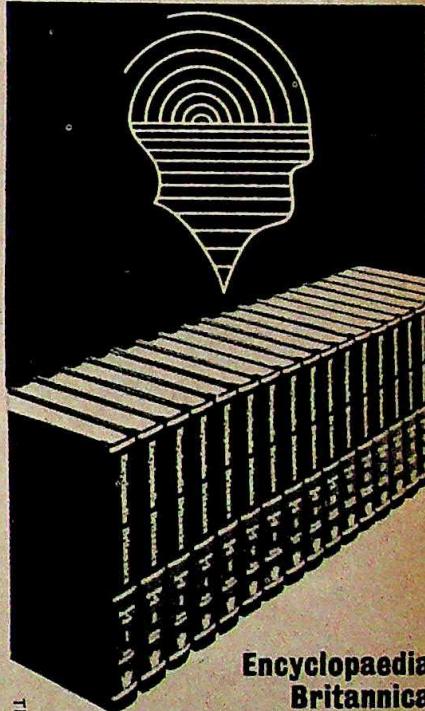
**Discriminate Cutting:** Recent trends have dimmed Bangalore's boast of being a garden city—with the fastest growth rate for a city in India, a phenomenal 76 per cent—this has attracted industrialists and property developers in increasingly large numbers.

help. But, says P.D. Gaonkar, conservator of forests: "This law empowers the Government and the city corporation to implement tree planting in every compound, but this is not done."

**Determined Strategy:** However, 20 industries in and around Bangalore have come forward to adopt avenues and traffic circles, and the Government on its part has granted permission to citizens of old localities where open spaces are not readily available to plant trees in front of their houses—all as part of the campaign to save the erstwhile "pensioners' paradise". Reflecting the determination of the Forest Department, Shyam Sundar says: "We are willing to do all the planting, we are willing to deliver the seedlings at home, we are willing to water the plants in public places if there is a drought—all that we expect in return is that these plants be allowed to become trees." If the hopes of the authorities come to fruition, Bangaloreans, so distressed in recent times about the building boom, can finally look forward to the renewed blooming of their city.

—CHITRA SUBRAMANIAM

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## **ADMINISTRATION**

# Scuffle On The Sidelines

**S**PORTS is at the centre of yet another controversy. The Government is presently mulling over a decision that is bound to have profound repercussions on the future of Indian sports. The issue is whether or not civil servants should be permitted to be office-bearers of the numerous sports bodies in the country. While the Central Government seems determined to direct its officials to withdraw from sports organisations, five state governments have already opposed the move, compared with two—Kerala and Punjab—who have supported it.

The seeds of the current controversy were sown in April 1982, when Phalguni Matilal, then secretary of the Railway Sports Board, wrote to Union Home Secretary T.N. Chaturvedi, alleging financial irregularities

clause prohibiting All India Service officials from holding office in any sports organisation in the country. The proposal required concurrence of state governments, so, on May 27, 1983, the Home Ministry sought their opinion. The letter addressed to state chief secretaries stated that if they did not reply by June 30, 1983, it would be presumed that they were in favour of the ban.

The letter said that it had come to the Centre's notice that some members of All India Service had involved themselves in controversial matters while seeking election to sports bodies. The letter also stated that a few officials—none was named—had misused their positions in sports organisations. The letter concluded that "such instances invite unfavourable criticism of the role of the members of the All India Service thereby



*"If the Central Government implements its decision, the whole sports management will collapse. It will be suicidal for the promotion of Indian sports if IAS and IPS officials are debarred from holding official posts in the sports organisation."*

—Raja Bhalindra Singh, IOA chairman

in the Indian Hockey Federation (IHF), which is headed by Inder Mohan Mahajan, of the Indian Police Service (IPS). In his representation, Matilal requested the Home Ministry to withdraw permission for Mahajan to be IHF president. Chaturvedi sought Mahajan's explanation and after a detailed probe, recommended in August 1982 that Mahajan be asked to quit the IHF.

Meanwhile, Raja Bhalindra Singh, president, Indian Olympic Association (IOA), wrote to the prime minister that it would be unwise to remove Mahajan just a few months before the Asiad. Mrs Gandhi directed her Principal Secretary Dr P.C. Alexander to look into the matter. While Mahajan was allowed to continue, the Prime Minister's Secretariat suggested that the Home Minister review the entire question of permitting government officials to hold positions in sports organisations.

**Government Proposal:** Taking the suggestion as a fiat, the Department of Personnel and Administrative Reforms of the Home Ministry decided to amend the All India Service conduct rules by inserting a

affecting their reputation and effectiveness". Predictably, the Centre's move caused a flurry in various state capitals. For there was not a single sports organisation at the state and district levels of which government officials were not members. Conventionally, deputy commissioners or district superintendents of police are ex-officio chiefs of district Olympic associations. And the sports bodies are heavily dependent on district officials not only for raising finances but also for arranging infrastructural facilities like playgrounds. Says Bhalindra Singh: "If the Central Government implements its decision, the whole sports management will collapse. It will be suicidal for the promotion of Indian sports if IAS and IPS officials are debarred from holding official posts in the sports organisation. Many of them have done commendable work in various fields."

Some states supporting the continuation of the present system have made the point that the presence of officials in sports organisations has been beneficial. They cite the role of officials at the Asiad last year, and the greatly improved performance of the

Delhi District Cricket Association and Indian Table Tennis Federation, where meetings and balance sheets have improved since the appointment of IAS officials on boards, to support their stand.

While the prime minister has yet to deliver her verdict on this question, she has ~~as~~ elected

## **ATHLETICS**

# **Special Olympics**

**W**HERE there is a will, there is a way. Few have demonstrated the truth of this cliché better than the four young athletes of the India team that participated for the first time in this month's Special Summer Olympics for the Mentally Retarded in Louisville, US. The triumphant team—totally retarded children—from Bangalore returned with a bag of four golds in the 50 m dash and softball. Sulochana Rodrigues, 19, captured golds in the long jump event, and Kennedy Pramod Khadye, 17, won a silver medal in the long jump event, and Kennedy, 16, a bronze in the softball throw. Gholap was the fourth member.

Earlier this year, the Association for the Welfare of Persons with Handicap organised its annual meet for mentally handicapped in association with the Lions Club. Tough Odds winners, four were selected to undergo intensive training at camps in N'hava Sheva, in preparation for an international meet.

Special training programme, Sadhana formulated to meet the specific pn. as acco the sports events, where children St An pitted against other children with average performances, which are normal p at after calculating already set re to her speed and distance of each child maswamy provision, according to Jagdish For Khad

sociation and various sports bodies after the Asiad. Ministers, MP's and MLA's are office-holders in various sports organisations, with such luminaries as Union Minister Sharad Pawar, Congress(I) President Sharad Pawar, Congress(I) Secretary B.S. Chidambaram, Jammu & Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah, former West Bengal chief minister Siddhartha Shankar Ray, Congress(I) President Sharad Pawar, Congress(I) Secretary V.K. Malhotra.

**Political Gimmicks:** Though some politicians have a genuine interest in sport or discipline, seen sportsmen themselves, others' intent is to exploit them either for their personal publicity or for promoting their own ideology — their entry into the sports world should be banned." But Bhalindra Singh may find it difficult to insulate the sports world against political influence. He failed during the Asiad when his plea for co-opting opposition leaders with a genuine sports background for conducting sports events was ignored. The stage seems set for increased politicisation of Indian sports.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

Wrestling Federation (IWF) recently at a controversial meeting of the general body. K.D. Minhas, a Punjab government official who headed IWF till last year, has challenged Dass's election. Though the election has yet to be confirmed by the IOA, the events were patronised by Sports Minister Buta Singh and MP Rajiv Gandhi.

Complains Bhalindra Singh: "We welcome politicians as sportsmen but not as politicians. Some of them have the tendency to politicise the sports organisations and exploit them either for their personal publicity or for promoting their own ideology — their entry into the sports world should be banned." But Bhalindra Singh may find it difficult to insulate the sports world against political influence. He failed during the Asiad when his plea for co-opting opposition leaders with a genuine sports background for conducting sports events was ignored. The stage seems set for increased politicisation of Indian sports.



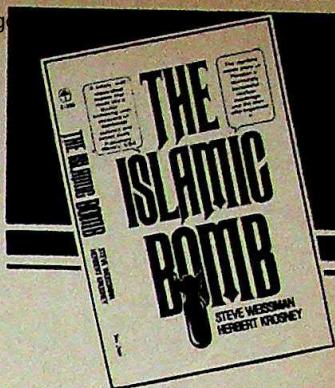
The winners display their medals: overcoming heavy odds

of five coaches who trained them, its annualised the athletes to participate at their handicapped levels".

**Lions Club Tough Odds:** The training certainly off, as the medals won by the young champs in Detes show. But each child has had to overcome: Rod, an orphan, had to be shifted to the Sadhana School, a special institution according to Sr Rosie Brigitte Sutare studies: "Ever since Kennedy has taken interest in sports, he is much better at his academic work."

With their victory in the prestigious international sports meet, these young athletes have clearly proved that a handicap cannot come in the way of determined effort.

—RADHA KHAMBADKONE



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COLLEGE OF ART

# Colling To Pieces

HAS produced such eminent artists as Ash Bhattacharya, Purnendu Patra, Suvaprasanna and Wasim Kapur and famous personalities such as Atul and Nerode Mazumdar as principals. Every year it attracts students from all over India. For all this the 90-year-old College of Art and Draftsmanship is facing a host of problems: it is short of funds and its building is crumbling, it does not have enough teachers and is woefully short of money. Says actor Victor Banerjee: "It is really strange that in a city which is considered to be the country's cultural capital, a premier institution like this should be allowed to rot in such a manner."

Formed in 1893 by Manmatha Chakravorty with generous grants from different princely states and the Government, the Indian College, as it was then known, always had a troubled history, ups and downs which were as the natural outcome of its dependence on irregular grants-in-aid. Things came to a head last decade when following a major agitation by students and staff, the state Government took over its management in 1977 for two

**Troubled History:** This was extended till 1982. The responsibility for management then passed to the Rabindra Bharati University dedicated solely to the promotion of art and culture, which has, however, displayed a marked disinterest in the college and has confined its activities to appointing an administrator and conducting examinations. There is just nobody to pay attention to such pressing problems:

"We need to totally renovate the building which has a part of its roof collapsed,"

"We need money to buy basic equipment such as pens and rollers for the graphics section;"

"There are only nine teachers against a requirement of 18 in the section and only seven non-teaching employees against a sanctioned strength of 14."

In desperation the teachers and students have got together and formed a committee including luminaries such as Paritosh Sen and

Sham Lahiri from the world of art. Commenting on the state of affairs in the college, teacher Santosh Chakravarty said: "Can you imagine there has been no auditing of the accounts for over 10 years now and this happened even when the Government was in charge? Every time auditors came they could not do anything as no books of accounts were available at any point of time." Another teacher, Shyamal Chakravarty said: "Though deductions are made from our salaries for provident fund, we have definite

evidence that these are not regularly deposited." The teachers said that in the last few years two of their colleagues have died but their families are yet to get their dues "as the books do not show what is due to them."

**Callous Attitude:** A spokesman of the Education Department said: "We have also heard about this but we do not know the exact situation." Even more interesting was the comment of the Rabindra Bharati spokesman: "Our task ends with the appointment of an administrator." The present administrator, a teacher of history was just unavailable and students and teachers said that he rarely came to the college.

The students have plenty of other grouses. Says Abhijit Mitra a student who is also in the committee for the institute's revival: "The government college gives its students degrees while we still get diplomas after the five-year course."

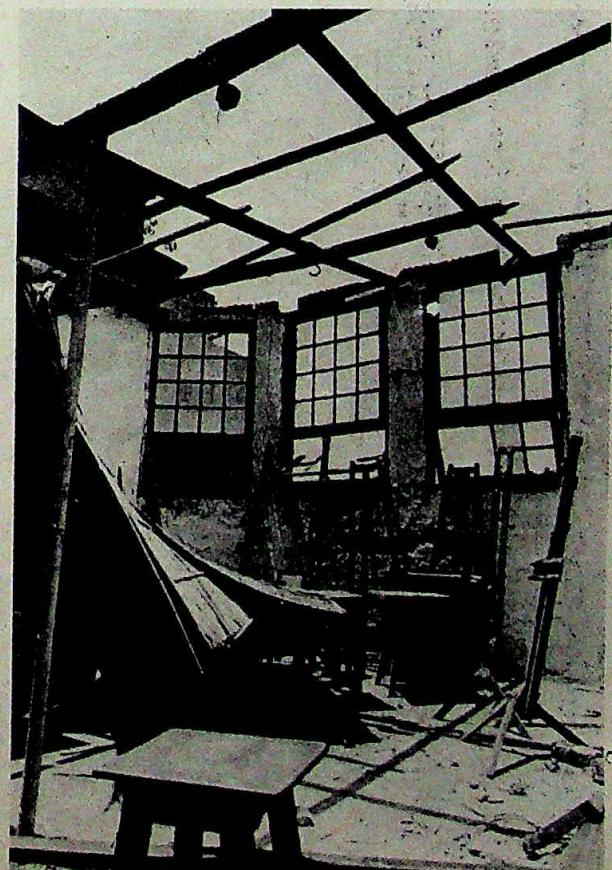
The primary demand of students and teachers is that the building should be acquired and totally renovated and the college should be shifted to an alternative site. Last fortnight the Minister for Higher Education, Sambhu Ghosh, assured them of some remedial measures. Says Abhijit Mitra sceptically: "For years now we have been listening to such assurances which have lost their meaning particularly as these are always verbal." He recalled that a few years ago the minister had visited the college and had "promised us new accommodation within 12 months. Many more months have passed and the only thing that has happened is with more and more rooms getting unusable, today if the fourth year commercial holds its class then the fifth year students have no other option but to loaf around in the street outside."

Thus one of the oldest art colleges in the country today has no gallery to exhibit the works of its many illustrious students and no library. Commenting on this another student said: "Do not talk of preserving canvases in a situation in which if there is a heavy shower in the night then we come back the next day to find our classrooms flooded and our previous day's work washed away." But the students and teachers are determined to "fight it out and see that our college celebrates its centenary which is only 10 years away". The way things are going they may have to hold that function on the road as the building is unlikely to last till then.

--SUMANTA SEN



The dilapidated college building (above) and a classroom: chronic problems



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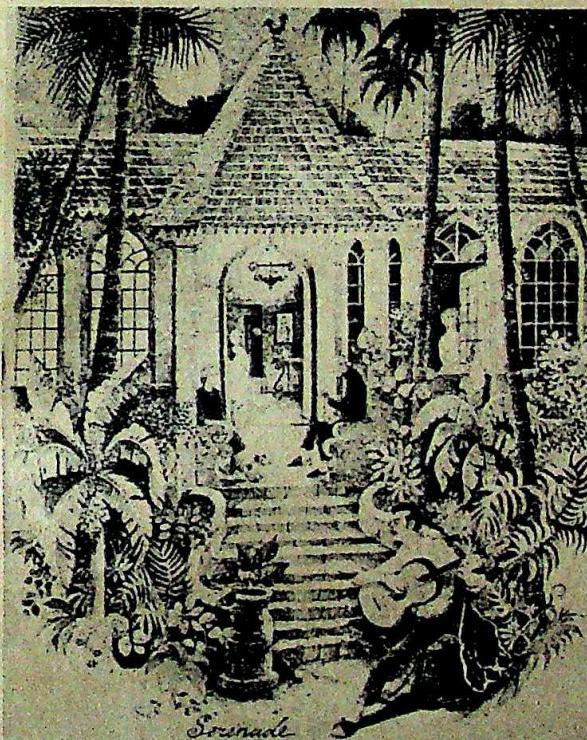
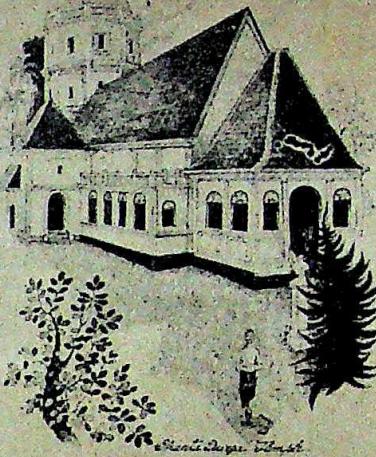
# bled Land

GOA  
NOHAR MALGONKAR  
ment of Goa  
not given; Pages: 182

GOA WAS once described by Jawaharlal Nehru somewhat disdainfully as a pimple on India's fair face. Goans resented the description, but they knew what he meant. Goa has been called so many things by so many people from St Francis to Sir Richard Burton (not Elizabeth's ex-husband, but the famous notorious, oriental traveller), diva to Haider Ali and from terque to Salazar, that they really mind what foreigners bout them as long as they come too close. What does an know of Goa, they ask, ang their shoulders. Malgon not quite an outsider and that one reason why he writes as if a Goan. And for a place that, ou come to think of it, is no han Bombay or Calcutta in e has written quite a good

e book was commissioned by an Government but this not be held against it. It is wards the end of the book author seems to have sudalised who was footing the is Goan holiday and has couple of 'touristy' chapters to go, where to stay") that be firmly ignored. The reader should not also be put the coffee-table style which e author little justice. The a little masterpiece and certainly the best introduc the mystery that is Goa, another book, much shorter but also by Mario (*A Family In Goa*), runs use to it.

**Portuguese Influence:** Although the may not like to be so told, Goa today the Portuguese made out of a nondeastal strip nestling cosily between Arabian Sea on one side and the othills of the massive Sahyadri range ther. It is the Portuguese who gave it and it was the continuing Portugu



The Shantadurga temple (top) and an evening scene

guese presence spanning four-and-a-half centuries—451 years and 20 days to be exact—that gives it its beguiling Mediterranean air. The Portuguese were the first European power to set foot in India and also the last to leave. They outspanned the combined rule over the rest of India by both the Mughals and the British. At the time of the Battle of Plassey which began the process of British expansion in India, the Portuguese had been in India for 250 years. The churches of old

Goa were already a hundred years old before the Red Fort or Taj Mahal were built.

Unlike the British, however, the Portuguese were more than colonisers and conquerors. They went about their Christianising mission with fanatical zeal and the scars show. At one time, more than half the population of Goa was Christian, for the Hindus had fled the territory in wave after wave, leaving behind only their lands and, of course, their temples. The surprising part is that though Goa was isolated from the rest of India for centuries, the Goans refused to be denationalised. To this day, Goan and Bombay newspapers are full of matrimonial ads from Catholic Kshatriya bachelors looking for Kshatriya girls and vice versa. In fact, so thin has been the veneer of westernisation that less than 20 years after the Portuguese left Goa, Christian parents were naming their babies Indira, Subhash and Mohan instead of Maria, Antonio and Raul. And the Portuguese language has all but vanished from what Salazar once described as the last bastion of western civilisation in the orient.

**Survivors:** Like the Jews, Goans are great survivors. They have survived the Portuguese, the Marathas and the Mughals, and many Goans say privately they may also survive the 'liberation' by India. Along with a tremendous capacity for adjustment, they have developed an impish sense of humour and, of course, of history. All the chief ministers of Goa so far have been persons who played no part at all in the liberation movement and those who did have been kept firmly on the sidelines. Goan politics, in fact, Goan life itself, is of the parish pump kind, for the place is actually an extended village where everyone knows everyone else, and often knows him too well to entrust him with authority or power. In such a tiny well-ordered society, men who do well are writers, artists, poets and musicians, and Goa has more of them per square metre than any other place in India. Mario has drawn some of them—and of course

the temples and the churches which also lie thick on the ground, and without which no book on Goa can be complete—in his inimitable style, to go along with precision. Some of his sketches, like that of Shantadurga at Kavlem, are superb, though a bit stylised. I should know, for I was born there, and the priest you see coming out of the temple is heading straight for my grandmother's house.

JAY DUBASHI



Jaya Bachchan at the show (left) and Kakar: doing good

■ Stars who become star wives don't just fade away. Jaya Bachchan, the petite, strong and silent presence behind Amitabh Bachchan keeps herself in trim with a little social welfare. Last fortnight, Jaya gave a little help and a lot of smiles at a function organised by Bombay's Indian Society for the Rehabilitation of the Handicapped. Jaya kept little Arti Kakar a handicapped child smiling on stage until the arrival of chief guest Pratibha Patil, Maharashtra's minister for food and civic supplies and social welfare. And with that kind of encouragement the child had no difficulty in giving a most satisfying recital, helped of course by the entire Bachchan clan: Amitabh lent his voice and his children Shweta and Abhishek their songs.

■ She's been at the top of the Hindi film charts warbling soulful melodies and belting out feet-tapping disco numbers. Now Asha Bhosale is into fruitful alliances. Last fortnight she teamed up with renowned Pakistani ghazal singer Ghulam Ali to release an album titled *Meraj-e-Ghazal*. Said Bhosale of her venture: "I gauged the success of my ghazal singing in *Umrao Jaan* [1981] and it gave me inspiration to go in for this venture. But believe me it was quite tough at first to try and adjust to Ghulam Ali's style." The soft-spoken melody queen, however, was ready with the claws when speaking about



Bhosale: team time

contemporary ghazal specialists. Asked about the attractive singer-actress Salma Agha (*Nikaah*) who, incidentally, is being given a wide berth by

Bhosale's music director husband R.D. Burman, she replied coolly: "Those kind of singers are not worth mentioning."

■ "The hotel was looking physically dilapidated. So all we are doing is a bit of product modernisation," quipped Rajen Jaitley, 33, the managing director of the India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC). But when ITDC decided to whitewash, literally, its 27-year-old 600-room **Ashok Hotel**, it raised more than just eyebrows. Admirers of the capital's oldest luxury hotel were, to say the least, furiously indignant at the sacrifice. The pink sandstone building, which blended well with Lutyens's Delhi, got more than a face-lift last fortnight, with a coat of white paint giving it the semblance of a hospital and a new

look decor thrown in for CHOGM show at the end of year. The ITDC called in renowned decorator Dale Keller from Athens at a fee of Rs 18 lakh approximately though entire renovation bill is close to Rs 3 crore. Said Jaitley: "We had to make people feel that hotel has changed and they will give it a touch of class. Also white is the colour of optimism and people will get used to it gradually." However, with competition from the capital's new hotels, the Ashok is more than just beauty in movement unless it wants to end literally, a white elephant.

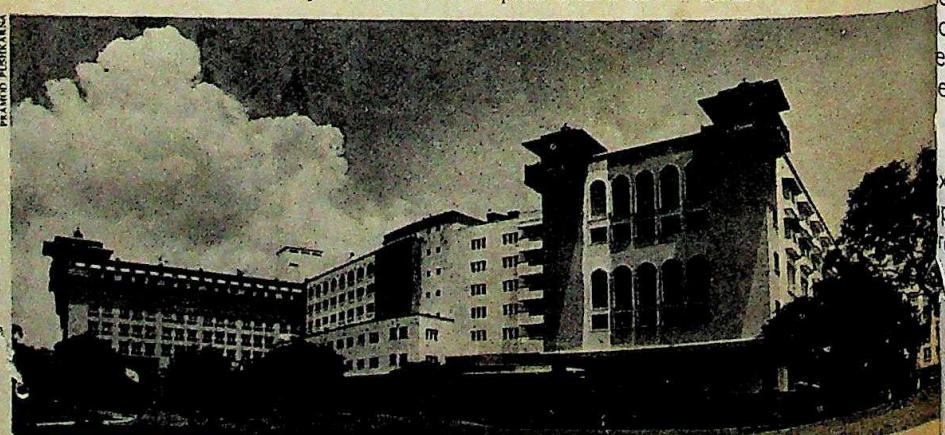
#### SIGN POSTS

■ Appointed: Shiv Singh as director-general of Central Reserve Police Force. Before this, he was inspector-general of the Border Security Force, headquartered in Jammu.

■ Appointed: Dr Ramanna, eminent nuclear physicist, as chairman of Atomic Energy Commission and secretary, Department of Atomic Energy. He takes over from Dr H.N. Sethna, who is retiring.

■ Appointed: K. Parasuraman as the attorney-general of India, for a period of years.

■ Appointed: Nurul Haq, former Union minister of India's ambassador to Soviet Union. He will be succeeded by Vishnu Ahuja, a career diplomat.



Hotel Ashok getting its new look: white elephant?

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Indian engineers and scientists have also designed, developed and built vehicles. Their achievements don't receive rave reviews in international automotive magazines for the simple reason that their work is not 'futuristic'. It's just very practical.

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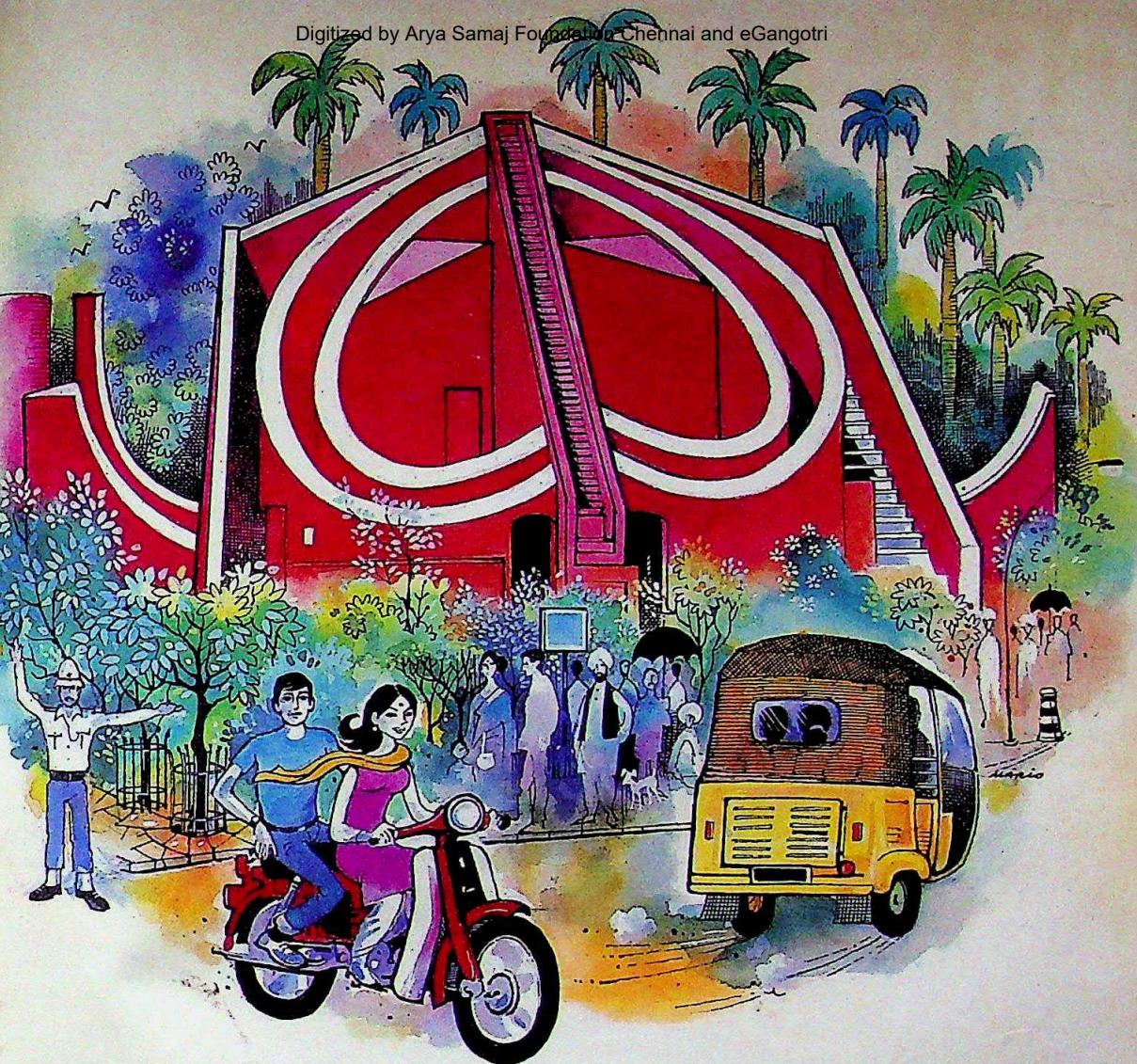
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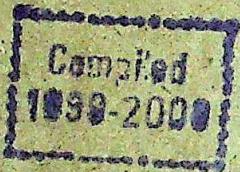


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